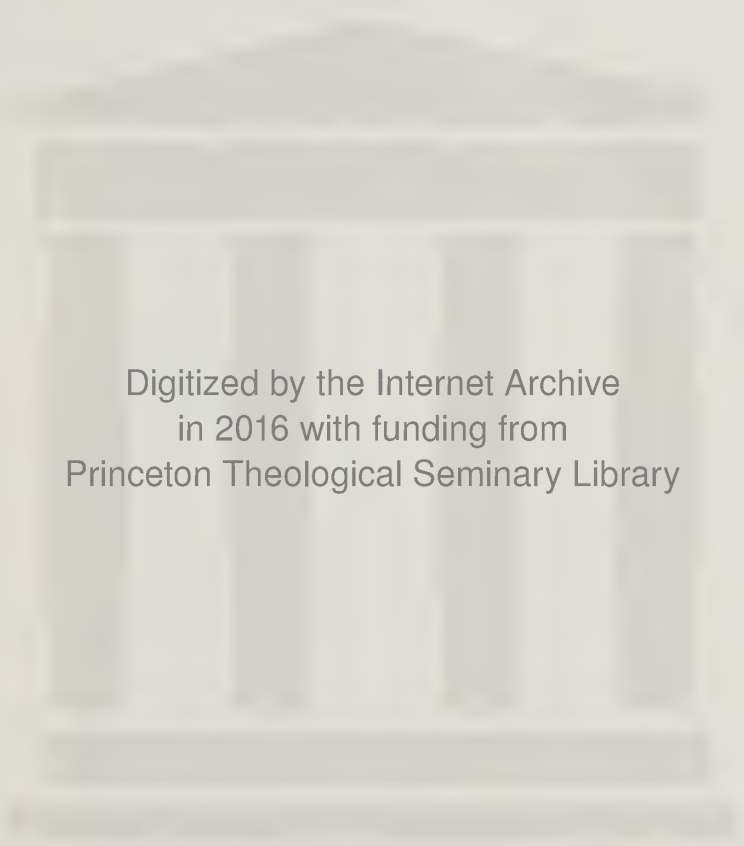


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THE PRINCETON SEMINARY BULLETIN

VOLUME XVIII NUMBER 1 NEW SERIES 1997

OPENING CONVOCATION
Becoming Theologians

THOMAS W. GILLESPIE

ECUMENICAL CONVOCATION
Ecumenical Challenges for the Future:
A Catholic Perspective

EDWARD IDRIS CARDINAL CASSIDY

A Reformed Perspective on the Ecumenical
Movement

JANE DEMPSEY DOUGLASS

INAUGURAL LECTURE
Practical Theology as Argument, Rhetoric,
and Conversation

RICHARD ROBERT OSMER

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VOLUME XVIII NUMBER 1 NEW SERIES 1997

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Becoming Theologians

by THOMAS W. GILLESPIE

Thomas W. Gillespie is President of Princeton Theological Seminary and author of The First Theologians: A Study in Early Christian Prophecy. He gave this Opening Convocation Address in Miller Chapel on September 17, 1996.

SOME TWENTY YEARS ago, I was a participant in a pastors' conference for Presbyterian ministers. In the midst of a seminar discussion, a colleague whom I greatly respected prefaced a comment by saying, "I'm not a theologian, but . . ." Honestly, I could not help myself. I groaned aloud and, calling my friend by name, muttered, "That's terrible." Since then, I have not changed my mind. I still think it is atrocious for ministers of the Word of God to disclaim the title (and the task) of a theologian. That is like physicians declaring disinterest in medicine or lawyers priding themselves in ignorance of the law. So my assumption is that you have come, or returned, to Princeton Theological Seminary this fall because it is your desire, in response to God's call, to become theologians. Tonight, I will focus on what that "becoming" entails.

I

Some helpful clues are found in Donald Light's account of the psychiatric residency in his book *Becoming Psychiatrists: The Professional Transformation of Self*.¹ Of special interest is his chapter on "The Moral Career of the Psychiatric Resident."² Learning to become a psychiatrist is not easy, he states, because professional training inevitably entails "altering the moral career of those who pass through it."³ What he means is this:

Psychiatric residents, like law students, military officers, and other professional candidates, feel anxiety and stress not because they are merely learning a series of techniques and a specialized body of knowledge, but because *their sense of self is being shaken*.⁴

His point is that every professional career entails a moral career because the professional is a human being who has "a certain moral stature" composed of values and self-image. These two careers are often in conflict, particularly in the experience of professional training.

¹ (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1980).

² *Ibid.*, 241-58.

³ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 244 (emphasis added).

For psychiatric residents, the conflict is between the world of values and the sense of self developed in medical school and the internship, on the one hand, and the new values advocated in their chosen residency, on the other. According to Light:

The young doctors find their professional values challenged and their identities threatened. Their pride in precise diagnosis, in swift effective action, and in responsibility for the patient's well-being, all meet frustration with these new patients. Staff tell residents to abandon "rescue fantasies," call active intervention "intrusion," warn that the patient may be manipulating the resident, and allude to similarities between the patients and the residents.⁵

In other words, the conflict between professional career and moral career is occasioned by an unavoidable tension between two ways of knowing. The scientific knowledge of medical doctors encourages them to value action and to see themselves as people in control. When they enter a psychiatric residency, however, they encounter an epistemic vagueness that reverses their professional and personal values as well as their individual self-images.

As the author tells it, the psychiatric resident must go through five stages of "moral transition" in order to complete the program successfully. The first is *feeling different and being discredited*. "Coming into any new program, a novice will feel different from those already there," he explains, "and the old hands will try to discredit those of the novice's ways that are not customary, even if this is done without plan or malice."⁶ Next comes the stage of *moral confusion*, which is "the net effect" of being different and discredited.

Are senior staff really serious when they say that one should not try to cure the patient? Is it right that the patient should do most of the work in therapy? What constitutes moral conduct is unclear. Is one's first duty to get patients out, or to sit through their pain and not administer drugs? Many residents are not sure from day to day why they are doing what they do.⁷

Stage two is followed by "the slump," in which the whole class experiences *numbness and exhaustion*. During this period, nothing seems to work. Everyone is tired—and sad. One resident does not care anymore. Another feels like a mere traffic station. Another points to the lack of results.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 246–47.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 249.

Out of this experience comes what Light calls "the moment of truth." One either quits or enters the fourth stage through a *moral transition* of one kind or another. Some give in to what he calls "therapeutic nihilism" and become "cynical, unbelieving, and chronically dissatisfied." Others become "bandwagon" residents who go with the latest fad. Most become receptive to the moral framework of the school of psychiatry represented in their residency or they find another theoretical orientation more congenial to their values and sense of self. In any case, it is at this point that moral renewal begins and leads to the fifth and final stage, *self-affirmation*, where the moral career and the professional career are both integrated and internalized. The features of this phase include a measure of professional self-confidence, an ability to live with conviction amid intellectual ambiguity, and a freedom from self-pity.⁸

II

If any or all of this sounds familiar to this audience, it is because it is. Anyone who has been to seminary recognizes that becoming a theologian is, with due recognition of the appropriate differences, very much like becoming a psychiatrist.

Consider the dissonance between the knowledge we bring with us to our theological studies and the knowledge that a theological education provides. For the psychiatric resident, it is a discord between the scientific knowing learned in medical school and the theoretically interpreted intuitions required in psychiatry. For many if not most of us, however, it is the difference between what we learned and how we learned it in church school, confirmation class, and Sunday sermon, on the one hand, and the way we are taught in seminary to think and talk about God and the issues of faith, on the other.

The late Helmut Thielicke, one of Germany's great Lutheran theologians of this century, explains it as a transition in thinking and speaking from the second person singular to the third. In his now classic pamphlet *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians*, he explains:

You know what I mean by that. This transition from one to the other level of thought, from a personal relationship with God to a merely technical reference, usually is exactly synchronized with the moment that I no longer can read the word of Holy Scripture as a word to me, but only as the object of exegetical endeavors.⁹

This shift and its sign are problematic, Thielicke argues, because they

⁸ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁹ (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 33-34.

violate sound theological method. Theology is our attempt to understand and answer the word of God addressed to us. “But it can only be understood when I (1) recognize that what has been said is directed to *me*, and (2) become involved in formulating a reply.” As Thieliicke puts it in a memorable phrase, “a theological thought can breathe only in the atmosphere of dialogue with God.” Further, he reminds us that “the first time someone spoke of God in the third person and therefore no longer with God but about God was that very moment when the question resounded, ‘Did God really say?’ (cf. Genesis 3:1)” — an observation worth pondering.¹⁰

Anyone familiar with this school’s origins will recognize that Thieliicke is advocating the same type of theologizing as that envisioned by our founders. *The Plan* (or, as we would say today, The Mission Statement) adopted by the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1811 stipulates that one purpose of the institution shall be:

to unite in those who shall sustain the ministerial office, religion and literature; that piety of the heart which is the fruit only of the renewing and sanctifying grace of God, with solid learning; believing that religion without learning, or learning without religion, in the ministers of the gospel, must ultimately prove injurious to the Church.¹¹

The issue this language seeks to address was identified by our own late professor of American Church history, Lefferts A. Loetscher. The first book in his projected but never completed three-volume history of the Seminary was entitled *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism*.¹² The issue, in other words, was learning how to speak theologically neither in the third person of Enlightenment objectivity nor in the first person of pietistic subjectivity but in the second person of dialogue.

But even theology as dialogue does not spare its students from the necessity of distancing ourselves, if not from God, then at least from ourselves—our important but limited experiences, our formational but particular traditions, and even our sincere but unexamined convictions. Theological reflection requires us to hear a story about the church that is greater than our own story or that of our faith community. It mandates that we listen to questions and answers that we have never heard before and often wish we did not have to hear now. In our theological education, we must even learn to live with

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ From the introduction to the *Plan of the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (April 1953 edition), 30–31.

¹² *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983).

questions for which there are no answers—at least none that are available to us. Our imagination is stretched, our reasoning is pushed, and our tolerance of ambiguity is taxed.

In this regard, becoming a theologian is very much like becoming a psychiatrist. Medical students come to a psychiatric residency armed with the quasi-assured knowledge of scientific disciplines such as anatomy, chemistry, biology—covering dimensions of reality that more or less stand still. Then they move into the realm of the human mind, emotions, and spirit. Here, instead of objectively grounded assurances, there are subjectively conditioned vagaries. Theological students come to seminary armed with the assured knowledge of personal faith as developed within believing communities that reinforce rather than challenge our assurances. Here, our subject is the divine Spirit, the risen Christ, the living God. Here, our moral career—our values and sense of self—is challenged by our professional career, by the need to think more broadly and deeply than we have ever thought before about the realities that matter most to us. Is it any wonder that here our sense of self is shaken?

Annie Dillard has a wonderful way of putting life and faith in proper perspective. What she says about the way I and my crowd worship is directly applicable to the way we study theology:

The higher Christian churches—where, if anywhere, I belong—come at God with an unwarranted air of professionalism, with authority and pomp, as though they knew what they were doing, as though people in themselves were an appropriate set of creatures to have dealings with God. I often think of the set pieces of liturgy as certain words which people have successfully addressed to God without their getting killed. In the high churches they saunter through the liturgy like Mohawks along a strand of scaffolding who have long since forgotten their danger. If God were to blast such a service to bits, the congregation would be, I believe, genuinely shocked.¹³

The truth is that God does do some blasting in the lives of those who are becoming theologians. And I am not thinking only of nervous evangelical students who come to seminary with their guard up, committed to resisting any thought that challenges a cherished belief. I am thinking also of overconfident liberal students, the closet unitarians, who have so much to learn about the scriptures and the theological tradition. They and all who find themselves

¹³ *Holy the Firm* (New York: Bantam, 1977), 60.

somewhere in between can expect a blast or two along this way of becoming a theologian. The sense of self will be challenged and shaken—inevitably.

III

So, tonight, something like the five-step process of moral transformation begins for some and continues for others. You who are entering juniors are, in all probability, feeling different already. And I promise you that soon you will experience being discredited. The middlers and seniors plus a teaching assistant or two will see to that. When you let it slip over lunch or dinner that you think Moses wrote the Pentateuch and Paul the Letter to the Ephesians, do not be surprised by the knowing looks, or worse, that you will receive from the local illuminati. At first, you will feel put down and abused. But hang in there, because soon you will catch on, and by the end of your first year you will be able to play the same game with others—particularly the unsuspecting folks back home who sent you here with their blessing.

Listen to Helmut Thielicke describe the all too typical scenario:

Picture a lively, active young man on good terms with his fellows in the youth work of his church. He has met Jesus Christ and now must bear witness. And so he is already occasionally leading devotions, for which he does not study commentaries, although he is careful enough to go through the printed aids which are available for such purposes, and he perhaps asks his pastor a question or two. For the rest he prays that God will grant him a right understanding of everything and keep him from speaking nonsense.¹⁴

The lively faith and effectiveness of this young leader occasion peers and pastor alike to encourage his interest in studying for the ministry of the church. And, in due season, he departs for his theological studies. Thielicke continues the story line:

When he comes home after his first semester, in the eyes of his former companions he has suddenly and horribly changed. If one of them, the young artisan, conducts Bible study that is highly lay in character, there he sits with the corners of his mouth drawn down. On their way home together afterward he explains to him . . . what “the latest investigation” has produced on the subjects of myth, legend, and form-history.

And even before the other has recovered from his momentary horror, he classifies him by that clerical typology that he has picked up in the lobby of his lecture hall. He says to his unlearned friend: “What you said was

¹⁴ Thielicke, *A Little Exercise*, 6–7.

‘typically pietistic,’ or ‘typically orthodox,’ or maybe ‘Methodistic.’” He says to him: “You belong to the school of Osiander, which has not yet comprehended the forensic character of justification,”—and he patronizingly explains to him the strange learned words, which are the questionable by-products of his scientific study.

Thielicke concludes, “It is understandable that many churches are not encouraged by such experiences to set great store by theology as taught at the university” (or, we might add, at the seminary).¹⁵

Honesty compels me to confess that I have been there and done that. Following a sixty-two-hour drive from Princeton to Los Angeles, I arrived home late at night from my first year of becoming a theologian. The next morning, I came to the breakfast table where my mother was reading her Bible over a second cup of coffee. She made the mistake of asking me what I had learned at seminary. And I, being full of myself, let it flow. I even reported on the four-source hypothesis regarding the literary relationships of the Synoptic Gospels. When I got to the part about Special Matthew and Special Luke, tears came to her eyes as she asked, “Do you still believe in Jesus?”

Now, this anecdote has several possible points. One is that young theologians use knowledge as an expression of power rather than love. Another is that there are some things you should tell everyone, some things you should tell only a few, and some things you should tell only those who ask. But the most important point is that my mother’s question was legitimate. Can you know all that is known or postulated about the Gospel tradition and still be a believer in Jesus Christ and a member of his church? The recently published results of the Jesus Seminar make the question inescapable. It is a tough question that compels us to think about at least a hundred other questions—about the nature of history and the role of tradition (oral and written), about the relationship between the so-called historical Jesus and the Christ of faith, about the identity of Jesus and the God he identifies, about the significance of his cross and resurrection, about the transforming power of his Spirit in the life of faith, about the nature of the church and its mission, about the character of the Christian life and its responsibilities, about the authority and interpretation of the scriptures, about the nature and methods of theology itself, to name but a few. My mother did not need to know or worry about many of these matters. But as one becoming a theologian, I did—and still do.

Is it any wonder that the moral career of many theological students comes into conflict with their new professional career? Is it surprising that confront-

¹⁵ Ibid.

ing such questions leads to a stage of confusion, which, if endured, brings on exhaustion (for juniors, usually at midterm exam time in the spring semester)? And is it not scary that all of this points to “a moment of truth” when we decide whether to quit or continue; and, if we choose the latter, whether to give in to “theological nihilism” and become like our psychiatric counterparts, “cynical, unbelieving, and chronically dissatisfied”; or whether to jump on some theological “bandwagon” and go with the flow; or whether to meet the issues head-on, think and pray our way into a theological understanding that will effect in us both a personal and professional transformation?

Becoming a theologian is certainly a frightening and risky business. It is a path we choose and follow by faith alone, in response to God’s call. But faith alone means we are not alone as we walk. Theology, remember, is at its best when it is a dialogue rather than a monologue. The God who has called us to this task, the God who forgives our sins, is the God who gives us permission to think the faith as well as confess it and live it. That means some have freedom to loosen up, and others have freedom to tighten up. The conservative is given permission to consider what it is that liberals care about, and the liberal is allowed to examine what it is that others find worthy of conserving. And yes, even moderates are encouraged to look for something that will build a fire under them. Our assurance is this, to quote Thielicke one last time, “He who provides forgiveness for a sinful life will also surely be a generous judge of theological reflections.”¹⁶

IV

My personal hope for each and every one of you is that you will reach stage five by the time of your graduation from Princeton Theological Seminary, that the integration of your moral career and professional career will result in a measure of professional self-confidence, a modest ability to live with deep conviction amid a world of intellectual ambiguity, and a freedom from self-pity. For something like this is the goal of the Christian life according to the Letter to the Ephesians, a goal designated by such phrases as “mature humanity,” “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” and growing up “in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (4:11–16). The God who calls us to this goal is also the God who calls us to the experience of becoming theologians for the sake of serving the church. May you hear and respond to this call.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

Ecumenical Challenges for the Future: A Catholic Perspective

by

EDWARD IDRIS CARDINAL CASSIDY

His Eminence Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy is President of the Commission on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. He gave this address in Miller Chapel on September 30, 1996 at the Ecumenical Convocation sponsored jointly by Princeton Theological Seminary and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Trenton.

I AM DELIGHTED to be with you in this ecumenical programme co-sponsored by the Diocese of Trenton and Princeton Theological Seminary in which we consider some future directions of the ecumenical movement. I am grateful to President Thomas W. Gillespie for inviting me to visit Princeton Theological Seminary and to Bishop John C. Reiss for his warm welcome to the Diocese of Trenton.

I am happy to be here for several reasons. One is that the programme reflects an important local ecumenical relationship which goes back over many years and is being in some sense renewed with this symposium. I refer to the cooperation between the Roman Catholic Diocese, Trenton, and this Seminary in the Reformed heritage, Princeton Theological Seminary. Local cooperation is crucial for the development of the ecumenical movement.

But a second reason is of a more international nature, given the presence of Dr. Jane Dempsey Douglass in this programme. While she is a distinguished scholar here at Princeton Theological Seminary, she is also the President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. We consider the Alliance as an important partner in the ecumenical movement. Since the Second Vatican Council we have had two phases of international theological dialogue with the World Alliance and we have started to discuss a third. We have had other fruitful contacts in a variety of ways with the Alliance as well. I have been invited to its next General Council which will take place in Debrecen, Hungary in August 1997, and I look forward to being there. We would still like our relationship with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to be even closer, and so I am delighted to have the opportunity of sharing this platform with the President of the Alliance and of exploring and comparing ecumenical perspectives with her.

In this presentation I intend first to reflect in broad terms on where the ecumenical movement has brought us on the eve of the third millennium. My reflection will include contributions that have been made by dialogue and contacts between Reformed and Catholic communities to reconciliation between them, as well as to the broader ecumenical movement. Then in the

course of this presentation I will propose three sets of ecumenical challenges for the future.

I. ECUMENISM ON THE EVE OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

I would suggest that on the eve of the third millenium, despite continuing division and tensions between Christian families, we find that through the ecumenical movement relationships between divided Christians have significantly changed and a new situation has emerged. Certain controversies that divided Christians in the fifth, the eleventh, and the sixteenth centuries have in some cases been largely overcome or are now seen in an entirely new light. Bonds of communion have once again been recognised where, in some cases, until recently, they had not. Common positions on key issues have been expressed. The most recent report of international dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Church stated, for example, that "We have discovered anew that the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches are bound by manifold ties" and "share more common ground than previously we were able to see."¹ A new "ecumenical map," so to speak, is taking shape. Some issues that blocked the way to reconciliation have been virtually resolved, allowing us to stand on a new common ground as we turn to other issues.

The recent papal encyclical on ecumenism, *Ut unum sint*,² points to some of these advances. First, much has been achieved toward the resolution of christological disputes with Oriental Orthodox Churches which touch on theological problems which have existed from the fifth century until the twentieth. As *Ut unum sint* notes, "In the period following the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has also, in different ways and with greater or lesser rapidity, restored fraternal relations with the Ancient Churches of the East which rejected the dogmatic formulations of the Councils of Ephesus [431] and Chalcedon [451]."³ Precisely in relation to Christology Popes Paul VI⁴ and

¹ "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church: Reformed/Roman Catholic International Dialogue, Second Phase (1984-1990)," Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, *Information Service (=IS)* 74 (1990), 92.

² Encyclical Letter *Ut unum sint* of the Holy Father John Paul II on Commitment to Ecumenism (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995).

³ *Ibid.*, # 62.

⁴ *Ibid.* Cf. "Joint Declaration by His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Holiness Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark of Alexandria (10 May 1973)," *Acta Apostolicae Sedes (=AAS)* 65 (1972), 299-301; also, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, *IS* 76 (1991), 8-9; "Joint Declaration by His Holiness Pope Paul VI and His Beatitude Mar Ignatius Jacob III, Patriarch of the Church of Antioch of the Syrians (27 October 1971)," *AAS* 63 (1971), 814-15.

John Paul II⁵ have been able to join the Patriarchs of some of these Churches, for example, the Coptic Orthodox and the Syrian Orthodox, in joint declarations stating their common faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

These joint declarations have not resolved all of the differences between these Oriental Orthodox Churches and the Church of Rome. But dialogue and other contacts, according to *Ut unum sint*, thus far have "made possible essential clarifications with regard to the traditional controversies concerning Christology, so much so that we have been able to profess together the faith which we have in common"⁶ on this issue which "for a long time . . . was a source of division between us."⁷

Second, a significant development has taken place also in regard to the rupture of relationships between Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics in the eleventh century, most notably from 1054, when authorities from each side pronounced excommunications against one another. Events during the last thirty-five years, since the Second Vatican Council, have, I believe, come a long way towards reversing the sad condition of the previous nine centuries. Even though problems remain to be solved, Orthodox and Roman Catholics can face the third millennium with a deeper hope for unity than ever before. Let me indicate some of the key developments.

An important advance was the Joint Declaration of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I on December 7, 1965, at the end of the Second Vatican Council, lifting the excommunications of the eleventh century.⁸ The

⁵ Pope John Paul II confirmed the christological agreement with Pope Shenouda and with him fostered its reception between the Catholic and the Coptic Orthodox peoples ("Letter of Pope John Paul II to Patriarch Shenouda III," *IS* 76 [1991], 12-13). His Joint Declaration in 1984 with the Syrian Patriarch of Antioch Mor Ignatius Zakka I was built on that of Paul VI with Jacob III and included initiatives for pastoral cooperation (cf. "Joint Declaration of Pope John Paul II and the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, Moran Mor Ignatius Zakka I Iwas [23 June 1984]," *IS* 55 [1984], 61-63). In 1993, in his address during the visit of the Ethiopian Patriarch, Abuna Paulos, Pope John Paul II could affirm that "We share the faith handed down from the Apostles, as also the same sacraments and the same ministry, rooted in the apostolic succession. . . . Today, moreover, we can affirm that we have the one faith in Christ, even though for a long time this was a source of division between us" (quoted in *Ut unum sint*, # 62). And by 1994, dialogue with the Assyrian Church of the East, which had broken contact with other Christian families over certain formulas of the Council of Ephesus (431), led to the signing of a common christological declaration by Pope John Paul II and the Assyrian Patriarch, Mar Dinkha IV, enabling them to profess together the true faith in Christ (The "Common Christological Declaration between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, November 11, 1994," *IS* 88 [1995], 1-6)

⁶ *Ut unum sint*, # 63.

⁷ John Paul II to Abuna Paulos, *ibid.*, # 62.

⁸ "A Common Declaration made by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, expressing their decision to remove from memory and from the midst of the Church the excommunications of 1054," in *Towards the Healing of Schism: The Sees of Rome and Constantinople: Public Statements and Correspondence between the Holy See and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1958-*

dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, which began in 1980, has produced significant reports underlining aspects of a common ecclesiology.⁹ But perhaps the most impelling symbol of the historic change in relationships that has taken place can be seen in the gradual recognition once again by the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches of each other as "sister Churches" with the deep theological meaning that this implies. This designation has been used by Popes and Patriarchs, and together by Orthodox and Catholic theologians in dialogue.¹⁰ In *Ut unum sint* Pope John Paul II underlined that in the effort to re-establish full communion between the Churches of the West and the East, "the traditional designation of 'sister Churches' should ever accompany us along the path."¹¹ The ability

1984, ed. E.J. Stormon, S.J., *Ecumenical Documents* 3 (Mahwah: Paulist, 1987), pp. 126-28. Cf. *Ut unum sint*, # 52.

⁹ "The Mystery of the Church and of the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity" (1982); "Faith, Sacraments and the Unity of the Church" (1987); "The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church, with Particular Reference to the Importance of Apostolic Succession for the Sanctification and the Unity of the People of God" (1988); "Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion" (1993).

¹⁰ Patriarch Athenagoras in 1963 was the first to use the term "sister Church" in reference to the Church of Rome ("Letter of Metropolitan Maximos to Pope Paul VI conveying the congratulations of the Patriarch on his election to the See of Rome" [September 9, 1963]; and "Telegram from Patriarch Athenagoras I to Pope Paul VI, conveying good wishes for the Feast of Easter" [March 27, 1964], in *Towards the Healing*, ed. Stormon, pp. 52 and 71 respectively). Pope Paul VI during his visit to the Church of Constantinople in 1967 used the term "sister Churches" in the brief *Anno Ineuntes* ("The Brief *Anno Ineuntes* handed by Pope Paul VI to Patriarch Athenagoras after Bishop Willebrands had read it out in the Latin Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, at the end of the joint prayer service" [25 July 1967], in *Towards the Healing*, ed. Stormon, pp. 161-62), illustrating some of the theological content that is its foundation: "By Baptism 'we are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28). In virtue of the apostolic succession, we are united more closely by the priesthood and the Eucharist. By participating in the gifts of God to his Church we are brought into communion with the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. . . . In each local Church this mystery of divine love is enacted, and surely this is the ground of the traditional and very beautiful expression 'sister Churches,' which local Churches were fond of applying to one another. (Cf. Decree, *Unitatis Redintegratio* 14)." The Pope then put the rediscovery of this designation between Orthodox and Catholic Churches in historic perspective: "For centuries we lived this life of sister Churches, and together held the Ecumenical Councils which guarded the deposit of faith against all corruption. And now, after a long period of division and mutual misunderstanding, the Lord is enabling us to discover ourselves as 'sister Churches' once more, in spite of the obstacles which were once raised between us."

¹¹ *Ut unum sint*, ## 55-58; quotation from # 56. The international Orthodox-Catholic dialogue referred to this relationship in facing one of the most difficult issues between the two, that of so-called uniatism. The most recent statement, published in 1993, offered a valuable theological solution to the problem, basing it on the mutual recognition of each other as "Sister Churches." It is on this basis that the two Churches have responsibility to search, according to the will of Christ, for perfect and total communion ("Uniatism, Method of Union of the Past, and the Present Search for Full Communion," Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic

of Orthodox and Roman Catholics to begin to speak once again of their relationship as that of "sister Churches" is an echo of the basic unity that existed in the first millennium, and a secure foundation on which to stand on the eve of the third millennium as the two resolve to settle the problems that still prevent full communion.

Third, we can trace important aspects of a new context also in reference to relations between the Roman Catholic Church and certain communities issuing from the Reformation in the sixteenth century. One of the important developments which are taking shape concerns the question of justification by faith, an issue at the heart of the Reformation. It has been taken up in dialogues between Roman Catholics and several partners. Important statements have been published resulting from international bilateral dialogues between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation,¹² the World Alliance of Reformed Churches,¹³ the Anglican Communion,¹⁴ and the World Methodist Council.¹⁵ I believe that as a result of what has been achieved in dialogue we are on the verge of a significant breakthrough which will contribute to the emerging new situation. Our dialogue with the Lutheran World Federation has reached a point in which the Federation and our Pontifical Council have taken a further and crucial step. We are now trying to move beyond theological dialogue to joint declaration. The results of Lutheran-Catholic dialogue, international and national, on this issue over the last thirty years have led us to conclude that we actually have a differentiated consensus on justification by faith. We are therefore together engaging in a reception process, working closely with each other, at this very moment, presenting a Joint Declaration on Justification by Faith to our respective churches, asking whether the churches themselves can agree that

Church and the Orthodox Church, Seventh Plenary Session, Balamand School of Theology, Lebanon, June 17-24, 1993, *IS* 83 [1993], 95-99).

¹² "Church and Justification: Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of Justification," Report of the Third Phase of Lutheran/Roman Catholic International Dialogue, *IS* 86 (1994), 128-81. Significant work has also been done in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue in the U.S.A. (*Justification by Faith*, Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VIII, Minneapolis, 1985), and in Germany (K. Lehmann and W. Pannenberg, *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990]).

¹³ "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," chapter 2, ## 77-88, pp. 104-6.

¹⁴ "Salvation and the Church—An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission ARCIC II," *IS* 63 (1987), 33-41.

¹⁵ "Honolulu Report, 1981," ## 13-15, in *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer (New York: Paulist; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), 370-71. This treatment is relatively brief, but it shows similarities between the teaching of the Council of Trent and John Wesley on some issues.

Lutherans and Roman Catholics have a consensus on the essential content of this doctrine. If this is the case, that would mean that it would be possible to say that the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century found in the Council of Trent and in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply today. We have aimed at 1997 to achieve this goal, the 450th anniversary of the Council of Trent's decree on justification. A General Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation also meets in 1997.

I want now to speak more specifically of Reformed-Roman Catholic relations and some contributions these have made to ecumenical progress. In contrast to centuries of intense hostility and separation, Reformed and Roman Catholics since the Second Vatican Council have begun to engage one another in constructive ways. There is still obviously considerable tension in this relationship, which becomes very visible at certain times. But I believe that there has been and there continues to be a genuine ecumenical partnership between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and our Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. It is from this international perspective that my comments will be made. I would suggest here, and I will comment on this later, that ecumenical progress between Reformed and Catholic Christians has a particular importance not only for these two communities; it has further implications for the broader ecumenical movement as well.

I would like to mention two notable aspects of this partnership. First, *Reformed and Roman Catholics have begun to enter into one another's life*. The presence of observers from various communities during four sessions of the Second Vatican Council, 1962–1965, among them participants sent by the two predecessor bodies to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, was mutually beneficial. The presence of the observers had a deep and beneficial influence on the Bishops. Cardinal Bea, first President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, illustrated this in quoting the words of an observer for the World Presbyterian Alliance at the first session in 1962, Professor James R. Nichols of Princeton Theological Seminary, who put it in a negative way. He said that "During the speeches made in the two months of the Council there has not been even a single phrase aimed at offending or humiliating the Protestant or Orthodox observers."¹⁶ But there was a very positive aspect as well. In meetings organised by the Secretariat for Christian Unity the observers were given a chance to discuss the same schemata as the

¹⁶ Stjepan Schmidt, S.J., *Augustin Bea: The Cardinal of Unity* (New York: New City Press, 1992), 458.

bishops.¹⁷ According to Cardinal Bea, points put forward by the observers at these meetings "were later expressed in the Council hall by one or another Council father."¹⁸

In the post-Conciliar period representatives of the World Alliance, as well as of other Christian Communion, have taken part since 1985 as fraternal delegates in various meetings of the Synod of Bishops in Rome.¹⁹ Representatives of two Alliance-member churches were fraternal delegates at the Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops in December 1991, and both addressed the full Assembly besides taking part in small-group discussions.²⁰ At the Ordinary Synod of Bishops' meeting in 1994, dedicated to the Consecrated Life, the Alliance was represented by the Prioress of the Communauté de Grandchamp, a community of women, many of whom are from the Reformed tradition. She too addressed the Synod.²¹ In 1995 this same Reformed sister, Sister Minke de Vries, was then invited by Pope John Paul II to write the meditations for the Way of the Cross, an important devotion during Holy Week, which is led by the Pope on Good Friday evening at the Colosseum in Rome. She was the first person from a church issuing from the Reformation to be invited to write these meditations.²² And in 1996 we invited the Alliance to send a fraternal delegate to our meeting in Rome of the Holy See's Central Committee for the Grand Jubilee 2000, the committee which is charged to guide the implementation within the Catholic Church of plans to prepare for and celebrate this special jubilee at the turn of the millennium.²³ The fraternal delegates were invited to contribute their ideas to the plans developing for the Catholic Church. We hope also to find ways to celebrate this coming great event ecumenically, that is, to plan

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 457.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* (n. 20). Schmidt cites the Anglican observer Bishop J. Moorman, who describes the particular example of Cardinal Meyer of Chicago presenting to the Council a thought of the Lutheran observer K.E. Skydsgaard.

¹⁹ At the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops Assembly in 1985 the Alliance representative was Dr. Lewis Mudge, the co-chairman of the second phase of the Reformed-Catholic International Dialogue. See "The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, November 25–December 8, 1985: Ecumenical Aspects," *IS* 60 (1986), 19–22.

²⁰ "Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops, November 28–December 14, 1991: Ecumenical Aspects," *IS* 81 (1992), 112–54, esp. 117, 121, 123.

²¹ Her address is summarised in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly edition in English, November 16, 1994. See also "Synod of Bishops on the Consecrated Life and its Role in the Church and the World, October 2–29, 1994: Ecumenical Aspects," *IS* 88 (1995), 16–21, esp. 20.

²² Sister Minke's meditations are found in English in "Via Crucis—1995: Ecumenical Perspectives," *IS* 89 (1995), 73–82.

²³ The Alliance sent a member of its Executive Committee, the Reverend Salvatore Ricciardi. "Meeting of the Central Committee for the Grand Jubilee 2000: Participation of Ecumenical Representatives," *IS* 91 (1996), 60–61.

together as partners with other Christians some events that are thoroughly ecumenical.

The World Alliance, in turn, has invited Roman Catholics into its life at different points, into its most authoritative bodies and into its ecumenical initiatives. Just as I have been invited to the next General Council in 1997, our Pontifical Council had been represented at previous General Councils of the Alliance and invited to take part in the group discussions. Annually we are invited to attend the Executive Committee of the Alliance and to take part especially in the meeting of the Department of Theology. Our representative is treated as a colleague. The Alliance has initiated consultations which it has asked our Pontifical Council to co-sponsor, such as one on the problem of fundamentalism which took place in Mülheim, Germany in 1993.²⁴

Other meetings could be mentioned. I review these invitations on both sides because, while they should not be overestimated, the fact that over the last thirty years, the Alliance and the Catholic Church have invited each other into the heart of their decision-making processes should not be underestimated as an important step towards reconciliation, towards a new relationship, helping to distance us from the hostility which characterised our relations in the past.

A second notable aspect in our relationship is that *through international dialogue and in contacts between the Pope and member churches of the Alliance, some models have emerged for dealing with difficult issues* between the Catholic Church and churches stemming from the Reformation. I will mention two examples.

One question that needs to be faced by divided Christians is that of history itself, the healing of bitter memories. During his visit to Switzerland in 1984, Pope John Paul II met leaders of the Swiss Evangelical Church Federation at a time when they were celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of Uldrych Zwingli and the 475th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. "The cleansing of our memories," said the Pope, "is an element of capital importance in ecumenical progress. It implies the frank acknowledgement of reciprocal wrongs and errors committed in the way of reacting towards each other when indeed each one wanted to make the Church more faithful to the

²⁴ The papers and reports of this consultation are published in H.E. Wilson, ed., *Christian Fundamentalism Today* (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1994). The Alliance has invited us to send a representative to a consultation of special interest to the Alliance, concerning "the New Dialogue Between the First and Second Reformations" held in 1994, the fourth in a series of the "Prague" conferences. Others had been held in Prague in 1984, 1987, and 1989. This fourth conference was held in Geneva, co-sponsored by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Lutheran World Federation, in co-operation with the Mennonite World Conference. It was the first of these in which a Roman Catholic participated.

will of the Lord.”²⁵ He expressed the hope that the day would come soon “when Swiss Catholics and Protestants will be able to write the history of that troubled and complex period together, with an objectivity rooted in deep fraternal charity. Such an achievement will allow us to commit the past to the mercy of God without reserve and to reach out in a complete freedom to the future, to make it more in keeping with his will (Cf. Phil 3:13).”²⁶

The second phase of dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Church took up this challenge of struggling with history and has made a contribution also to the larger ecumenical movement. Perhaps it was the first international bilateral to focus somewhat extensively on the general period of the Reformation itself. The dialogue report published in 1990 was entitled “Towards a Common Understanding of the Church.”²⁷ Its first chapter, entitled “Towards a Reconciliation of Memories,” addresses the events of the sixteenth century, as well as developments that have taken place since from both perspectives. The participants were not quite able to write that history together. But they describe the methodology they used and the intensity of the experience, and they hint at the progress they did make in this way:

We first drafted our respective parts of this chapter separately. Reading and reviewing these drafts together we learned from each other and modified what we had written. We were reminded that over the centuries our forbears had often misunderstood each other’s motives and language. We learned that our histories were sometimes a matter of action and reaction, but that at other times we followed separate paths. We occasionally heard each other speak vehemently and felt some of the passions that dictated the course of historical events and still in some ways drive us today.

All this has contributed to a certain reassessment of the past. We have begun to dissolve myths about each other, to clear away misunderstandings. We must go on from here . . . to a reconciliation of memories, in which we will begin to share one sense of the past rather than two.²⁸

While the international dialogue has grappled with this issue, the question of the healing of memories has been addressed also pastorally in contacts

²⁵ “To the Swiss Evangelical Church Union,” Kehrsatz, June 14, 1984, *IS* 55 (1984), 47.

²⁶ *Ibid.* In fact such an historical project by Swiss Protestants and Catholics was just beginning at that time. It was recently completed. See *Ökumenische Kirchengeschichte der Schweiz*, ed. Lukas Vischer, Lukas Schenker, and Rudolf Dellsperger (Freiburg: Paulusverlag, 1994). Reference is made in the preface to this statement of the Pope at Kehrsatz in 1984 (p. 14).

²⁷ “Towards a Common Understanding of the Church,” 91–118.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, ## 15–16, p. 93.

between Pope John Paul II and several other member churches of the World Alliance. I give four illustrations. First, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland welcomed the Pope when he visited that country in 1982.²⁹ Significantly, four years later in 1986, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland made a declaration stating that it no longer affirmed certain anti-papal aspects of the Westminster Confession of Faith and does not require its office bearers to believe them.³⁰ Second, during his visit to the Czech and Slovak Federation Republic in 1990, the Pope, recalling the strong feelings for and against the memory of John Hus, challenged Czech theologians to "define more precisely the place which John Hus occupies among the reformers of the Church," saying also that one cannot deny his personal integrity of life and his commitment to the moral education of the nation.³¹ A study process has been under way among Roman Catholics and members of various other churches including the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, seeking to clarify the contribution of Hus in a way that can be appreciated by all. Third, during his visit to Debrecen, Hungary in 1991, at an ecumenical service in the Reformed Church there, the Pope referred to Protestant martyrs of the religious wars of several centuries past and also visited the shrine in the church dedicated to them, a gesture deeply appreciated by the leaders of the Reformed Church in Hungary.³²

And more recently, steps leading to the canonization in 1995 of Jan Sarkander by Pope John Paul II in Olomouc, the Czech Republic provided a pastoral challenge. This event recalled for some the religious wars of the seventeenth century. Sarkander, a Catholic priest who was put to death by Protestant officials in 1620, was beatified as a martyr in the nineteenth century by Catholics, but accused by Protestants of being associated with the violent *re-catholicization* of that area at that time. His canonization in 1995 was interpreted by Catholics as an acknowledgement of his priestly fidelity in the midst of martyrdom, but by Reformed Christians as a contemporary reaffirmation of the violence done to them in the past. While no suitable solution was found to satisfy either side, several things that took place might be helpful in

²⁹ "Meeting with the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland" (May 31), *IS* 49 (1982), 51.

³⁰ *Reformed and Roman Catholic in Dialogue. A Survey of the Dialogues at National Level*, ed. Lukas Vischer and Andreas Karrer (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1988), 98. These included chap. 25, sec. 6: "He [the Pope of Rome] is Antichrist, that Man of Sin and Son of Perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God."

³¹ Pope's visit to Czech and Slovak Federation Republic; "Meeting with Cultural leaders and Representatives of other Christian Communities, April 21, 1990," *IS* 81 (1992), 65.

³² "Discourse at Ecumenical Service at Debrecen, August 18, 1991," *IS* 81 (1992), 74.

the future. First, besides intense Catholic-Reformed discussion on the local level, a frank correspondence took place before the canonization between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Another set of correspondence took place between myself and local Czech Protestant leaders, and there was an exchange of letters between Pope John Paul II and Dr. Pavel Smetana, Synodical Senior of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren.³³

In his letter the Pope indicated that he saw the event as an opportunity to express a critical evaluation of the religious wars of the seventeenth century with their numerous Protestant and Catholic victims. The approach of the year 2000 was a time of grace for all of us, a time to ask pardon and to offer pardon.³⁴ And in his homily during the canonization the Pope stated: "I as Pope of the Church of Rome, in the name of all Catholics, ask forgiveness for the wrongs inflicted on non-Catholics during the turbulent history of these peoples, at the same time I pledge the Catholic Church's forgiveness for whatever harm her sons and daughters suffered."³⁵ We have heard recently that since the canonization, a commission has been formed in the Czech Republic, including Catholics and Reformed, to study together that period of history which this canonization brought to mind.

In these examples we see in the context of Reformed-Catholic relations mutual efforts to come to grips with the past, to study it together instead of separately. We hear words of forgiveness. These vignettes are signs of grace fostering in certain localities a healing of memories, which others could learn from as well.

A second arena in which Reformed-Catholic dialogue has made a contribution is in clearly articulating areas of agreement on issues related to salvation. The second chapter of "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," entitled "Our Common Confession of Faith," was developed to show that despite continuing separation, the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches "share more common ground than previously we were able to see"³⁶ and what unites us is "more essential than that which separates us."³⁷ The report illustrates our "fundamental agreement that our Lord Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and humankind, and that we receive justification by grace through faith." From this it follows "that together we

³³ "Correspondence and Statements Concerning the Canonization of Blessed Jan Sarkander," *IS* 89 (1995), 64-72.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁶ "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," introduction, # 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, # 65.

also confess the Church as the community of all who are called, redeemed and sanctified through the one mediator."³⁸

The orientation of this common confession, as has been noted, "is conditioned by the concerns that stood at the heart of the controversy between Catholics and Reformed" and is "strongly soteriological."³⁹ They spoke together of what is involved in salvation. "The New Testament faith that 'in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself' (2 Cor 5:19) and that Christ is the one and unique Mediator between God and humankind, is the centre of Calvin's Christology as it is expressed in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*."⁴⁰ And the description of the calling of the Church "to share in the salvific activity of Christ"⁴¹ touches on "a crucial issue in a dialogue between Catholics and Protestants."⁴²

I said at the beginning that I would propose three sets of ecumenical challenges for the future. Drawing on what has been said thus far, I propose now as the *first major challenge* for the future the *reception of what has been achieved and the renewal of our communities according to these achievements*. The future of the ecumenical movement depends, first of all, on harvesting and receiving into the lives of our communities, the significant results achieved by dialogue thus far. It requires that the Churches engage in official reception processes by which they seek to accept the new insights into the life of their Church, "renewing in a certain way"—as stated in the revised Ecumenical Directory of 1993—"that which fosters reconciliation with other Churches and ecclesial communities"⁴³ so that the transition will continue to take place, from being communities standing alongside one another to being communities fully engaged and interrelated with one another. It requires that the Churches endorse the thresholds already crossed and commit themselves to crossing others. It requires that they stand upon the new common ground already acknowledged and seek to broaden it, in order to be architects of a new situation.

II. CLARIFICATION OF THE GOAL AND COMMITMENT TO IT

But how can we build on what has been achieved? How can we go forward? This leads to consideration of the goal that we seek.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, introduction, # 8. Chapter 2 develops these issues in detail in ## 64–88.

³⁹ Jos E. Vercruyse, S.J., "A Comment and Reflections on 'Towards a Common Understanding of the Church,'" *IS* 74 (1990), 121.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," # 85.

⁴² Vercruyse, "A Comment and Reflections," 121.

⁴³ *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (Vatican City: Pontificium Consilium Ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam, 1993), # 182.

I am reminded of the words of Pope John Paul II to a delegation from the Netherlands which visited him in 1986, and which included leaders of two member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. He spoke of the past and of the future. "As we look at the history of our separation," he said, "perhaps we can recognise that we are all victims of events that divided us centuries ago. . . . We are victims of a history that we did not create, but which affects us today."⁴⁴ The question to us now, he said, "is whether we can become architects of a new situation in which divisions between us are healed at the root, so that the scandal of disunity may be consigned to the past, to history."⁴⁵

These final years before the jubilee year 2000 are a special time of grace. The sense of uniqueness of this period has inspired various proposals to advance further the ecumenical movement to build a new situation.⁴⁶ In his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, Pope John Paul II has suggested that "the approaching end of the second millennium demands of everyone an examination of conscience and the promotion of fitting ecumenical activities, so that we can celebrate the Great Jubilee, if not completely united, at least much closer to overcoming the divisions of the second millennium."⁴⁷ The General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Konrad Raiser, has recently taken up again a challenge originally made in 1968 at the Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches, suggesting that, in the year 2000, the major Christian traditions work toward a universal council to resolve issues still dividing Christians, including the primacy of the Pope.⁴⁸ I

⁴⁴ "Pope's Homily at Prayer Service, March 21," *IS* 60 (1986), 16.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ For Catholics the 1994 Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* of Pope John Paul II, designed to prepare the Catholic Church for the Jubilee year 2000, also had significant ecumenical aspects. It said that "the ecumenical and universal character of Sacred Jubilee can be fittingly reflected by a meeting of all Christians . . . (which) should be . . . carefully prepared, in an attitude of fraternal co-operation with Christians of other denominations and traditions" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente: Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Bishops, Clergy and Lay Faithful on Preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000* [Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994], # 55). A Central Committee for the Jubilee celebration is now seeking ways to cooperate with other denominations in order to bring that about.

⁴⁷ *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, # 34.

⁴⁸ Already in 1968 the Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches had challenged the Churches "to work for the time when a genuinely universal council may once more speak for all Christians." This challenge was recently taken up again by the current General Secretary, Dr. Konrad Raiser, who has proposed that the main world families of Christians—Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal—should start preparations, a binding process—a conciliar process—at the beginning of the next millennium for a universal Christian council to resolve the issues dividing Christians. These would include issues which are presently controversial, such as the primacy of the Pope (*Ecumenical News International*, no. 12, 25 June 1996, 3–4). This proposal has gotten

believe that Christians can agree on the desire to resolve issues that still divide them. The way to do this will, however, require clarification.

Hopefully, the year 2000 will see renewed commitment to the quest for Christian unity. But one factor on which further advances will depend, concerns the goal, the unity that we seek. I propose therefore that a *second major challenge* for the ecumenical movement will be to *clarify the goal towards which we are moving, and to give decisive commitment to it*, more than has been the case till now. There are several factors involved here.

The goal of the ecumenical movement has been under discussion for many years. And I believe that, first of all, there is a great deal of convergence among Christians concerning the broad framework and major contours of the unity we seek. For example, the Constitution of the World Council of Churches offers as the WCC's first function and purpose: "to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe."⁴⁹ This is very close to the vision expressed by *Unitatis Redintegratio* (#2) of the Second Vatican Council which spoke of Christ perfecting the fellowship in unity of his people "in the confession of one faith, in the common celebration of divine worship, and in the fraternal harmony of the family of God."⁵⁰

More challenging, of course, is the specific content of unity. On what must we agree in order to achieve visible unity? Three statements describing the unity we seek published by the General Assemblies of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi (1961), Nairobi (1975), and Canberra (1991) have gradually unfolded the meaning and dimensions of visible unity. One can trace in each the developing convergences, the growth in agreement, resulting from ecumenical dialogue, on issues such as baptism, eucharist, and ministry which relate to the content of unity.

There is agreement, too, that this visible unity in the one apostolic faith,

significant attention, including support from the General Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. (For example, *Lutheran World Information*, no. 14, 18 July 1996, 4-5; *The Reformed Ecumenical Council News Exchange*, 33, no. 8, August 1996, 2-3.)

⁴⁹ "Constitution and Rules," in *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report, Seventh Assembly, World Council of Churches, Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991*, ed. Michael Kinnamon (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 358.

⁵⁰ Also "almost everyone, though in different ways longs that there may be one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and sent forth to the whole world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved to the glory of God" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, # 1). More recently, the encyclical *Ut unum sint* stated concisely: "the ultimate goal of the ecumenical movement is to re-establish full visible unity among all the baptised" (# 77). This includes attaining "full unity in faith," enabling us to "celebrate together in peace the Holy Eucharist of the Lord."

this full communion that we seek, is not uniformity, but "unity in legitimate diversity."⁵¹ But here again we are challenged. What precisely is legitimate diversity? The rich mosaic of insights stimulated by the mystery of revelation, the mystery of God's contact with humanity, could obviously lead to diversity in doctrinal expression of the one faith. But at what point do different interpretations of the apostolic faith, or different positions taken on ethical and moral issues, reflect no longer the *diversity* which enriches unity, but instead *divergence* which prevents unity? At what point is the rich mosaic of diversity which witnesses to the Christian faith replaced by a discordance which is a betrayal of the Christian faith? This is one of the principal questions with which we will have to struggle. While more clarity is emerging about the goal that we seek, agreement on the content of this unity will continue to be a challenge to us in the new century. But the very objective of the dialogues which we undertake is precisely to clarify this content.

Another part of this challenge also concerns the question of whether Christians are willing to commit themselves to the goal of unity. One can see this problem in the way the goals of some bilateral dialogues are stated. For example, in certain bilateral dialogues involving the Roman Catholic Church, our partner has been able to join us in clearly stating that our mutual goal is full communion or visible unity.⁵² In other dialogues we can only call each other at this time to intermediate goals such as coming to a mutual understanding of convergences and divergences between the partners, overcoming prejudices between them,⁵³ but not yet to visible unity.

In regard to the dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, do we not detect a certain ambivalence as to the goal? The introduction to the report of the most recent phase of dialogue, "Toward a Common Understanding of the Church" (1990), said that the purpose of the dialogue "has been to deepen mutual understanding and to foster the eventual reconciliation of our two communities."⁵⁴ In the last chapter of the report the participants, citing their mutual

⁵¹ *Ut unum sint*, # 54. The Canberra statement speaks of the limits of diversity, and when diversity is illegitimate. See "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling," # 2.2, in *Signs of the Spirit*, ed. Kinammon, 173.

⁵² With Orthodox, Anglican Communion, Lutheran World Federation.

⁵³ Cf. "Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World: A Report on the Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversations, 1984-1988," *IS* 72 (1990), 5. Also, cf. "Perspectives on Koinonia: The Report of the Third Quinquennium of the Dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, 1985-1989," *IS* 75 (1990), 179.

⁵⁴ "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," introduction, # 1, p. 92.

belief “that the unifying power of the Holy Spirit must prove stronger than all the separation that has occurred through our human sinfulness,” say finally that “this confirms our conviction that we must work for the ultimate goal of full communion in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship.”⁵⁵

But, is there on both sides some reluctance to commit ourselves? As we Catholics look at World Alliance literature we sometimes detect a certain pessimism about what the Reformed-Roman Catholic dialogue can achieve. For example, in the Discussion Papers and materials of the last General Council in Seoul (1989), when this dialogue is mentioned, achievements of the dialogue are clearly expressed,⁵⁶ but one also sees phrases such as “major short-term results should not necessarily be expected”⁵⁷ or “little more than participation in the dialogue itself can be expected”⁵⁸ or the “differences in the matter of ecclesiology are so deep, certainly, as to rule out any talk of a decisive convergence.”⁵⁹

We cannot be unrealistic; there are significant differences between Reformed and Roman Catholics on important matters of faith. Despite what has been achieved and the common ground we have found in dialogue, there still remain suspicions between Reformed and Catholics, hesitations about how far towards unity our differences will allow us to go, or even indifference to the ecumenical task. But despite those problems, must we not also put ourselves in the hands of God? Must we not together state clearly our commitment to seeking full visible unity as a response to Christ’s prayer for the unity of his disciples?⁶⁰

Because it is so challenging, I believe that progress in ecumenism and commitment to the goal of visible unity will then require our ecumenical work to be rooted in deep spiritual foundations. The encyclical *Ut unum sint* gives priority to spiritual ecumenism, and I would like to indicate some of its views. It speaks first of all of prayer and prayer for unity, not simply as one aspect of ecumenical work, but rather as “the ‘soul’ of ecumenical renewal and of the yearning for unity”⁶¹ because it is here that we are closest to Christ. According

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, # 146, p. 115.

⁵⁶ *Mission and Unity*, Discussion Paper and other Reading Materials, Section II, 22nd General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, August 15–27, 1989, Seoul, Korea (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1989), 72, 74–75, 79–80.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 70

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 71

⁵⁹ *From Ottawa to Seoul: A Report of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1982–1989* (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1989), 71.

⁶⁰ Cf. John 17:21

⁶¹ *Ut unum sint*, # 28.

to *Ut unum sint*,

Along the ecumenical path to unity, pride of place certainly belongs to common prayer, the prayerful union of those who gather together around Christ himself. If Christians despite their divisions, can grow ever more united in common prayer around Christ, they will grow in the awareness of how little divides them in comparison to what unites them. If they meet more often and more regularly before Christ in prayer, they will be able to gain the courage to face all the painful human reality of their divisions.⁶²

Prayer furthermore prepares us for change, for metanoia. "Fellowship in prayer leads people to look at the Church and Christianity in a new way."⁶³ Ecumenism calls for interior personal conversion as well as for communal conversion.⁶⁴

One result of ecumenism according to the encyclical is an increased sense of the need for repentance, an awareness "of certain refusals to forgive, of a certain pride, of an unevangelical insistence on condemning 'the other side.'"⁶⁵ Prayer and the conversion of hearts "will also lead to the necessary purification of past memories."⁶⁶ In the view of the encyclical, "with the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Lord's disciples, inspired by love, by the power of the truth and by a sincere desire for mutual forgiveness and reconciliation, are called to re-examine together their painful past and the hurt which that past regrettably continues to provoke even today."⁶⁷

While the spiritual aspects, in our view, have a priority, there are also many tools at our disposal to help us to become "architects of a new situation" in the future. The *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* published in 1993 develops at some length suggestions for Catholics concerning ecumenical formation, ecumenical cooperation, dialogue and common witness, which will be helpful as we work toward the future and build new relationships. Indeed while certain theological differences between Christians may not be easily resolved, there are many areas of cooperation which we can undertake now, such as common Bible work, cooperation in social and cultural life, cooperation in the field of development, human need, and stewardship of creation, to name a few.⁶⁸ These efforts will help bind us

⁶² *Ibid.*, # 22.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, # 23.

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, # 15.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, # 2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (Vatican City: Pontificium Consilium ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam, 1993).

together as we seek to deal with issues that now keep us from visible unity, and help us to deepen our commitment to the goal of unity.

III. BROADER PARTICIPATION IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

I turn now to a third consideration. Perhaps all Christian communions involved in the ecumenical movement need constantly to invite their constituencies into deeper ecumenical engagement. But, beyond this, one of the disappointments of the modern ecumenical movement, as we approach the end of the twentieth century, is the fact that there are still large numbers of Christians, for example, many evangelicals and Pentecostals, some of whose constituencies are growing rapidly, who remain outside of formal mainstream ecumenical contacts with the World Council of Churches or with Roman Catholics or with others.

Consequently, a *third challenge* for the twenty-first century concerns *comprehensiveness*; there is need to encourage those Christians not involved or not so strongly involved to come more directly into the ecumenical movement, so to make the movement more comprehensive, and more inclusive.

And here I come back to the suggestion I made earlier in this paper that ecumenical progress between Reformed and Catholics has particular importance also for the broader ecumenical movement. To be more specific, the dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Catholic Church may have significance far beyond the constituencies they represent.

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches, while representing a variety of traditions and drawing on a rich tradition of Reformed theology through the centuries,⁶⁹ also brings forward the heritage of John Calvin and other reformers. Yet there seem to be many evangelicals who belong to communities which are not members of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and are not so involved in the mainstream ecumenical movement but whose faithful may be deeply formed or influenced by John Calvin and/or the Calvinist tradition.

To illustrate: a recent joint statement, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium" (1994), resulted from an informal, unofficial dialogue that brought together Catholic theologians and evangelicals, some of whom have not usually been involved in ecumenical efforts, especially with Catholics. The report caused a stir and many comments and criticisms. The leaders of this project, Charles Colson and Richard Neuhaus, therefore edited a book the following year in which

⁶⁹ "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," # 27.

several persons from each side responded to the criticism. In one essay, an evangelical, J. I. Packer, defended his participation in the dialogue with Catholics, while strongly maintaining his evangelical principles. The influence of John Calvin was very clear. He assured his evangelical constituency: "For half a lifetime I have publicly proclaimed and defended as biblical and true the Reformed theology that was given shape (by Calvin) in direct opposition to Roman Catholic teaching on revelation, salvation and the Church, and I maintain this theology and this opposition still."⁷⁰ To be fair, he also stated, however, that informal grassroots collaboration with Catholics is the most fruitful sort of ecumenism that one can practice.⁷¹

Also a recent analysis of Roman Catholicism by the theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship made several strong references to the thought of John Calvin when illustrating apparent differences between evangelicals and Catholics on issues such as the authority of Scripture and "sacramentalism."⁷²

The examples cited above suggest that if the dialogue between the World Alliance and the Roman Catholic Church is successful in helping to resolve long-standing theological differences between us, this may also be of service to other Christians not presently part of the usual ecumenical circles. This dialogue may serve as a bridge, inviting into the movement some of those presently not so deeply involved in it, or even outside of it.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the last chapter of "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," the report of the second phase of Reformed-Roman Catholic international dialogue, there is a beautiful phrase that describes the relationship that should now attain between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches. They should, it says, no longer oppose each other or even simply live side by side. "Rather, despite their divergences, they should live for each other in order to be witnesses of Christ."⁷³

The Catholic Church is committed to the ecumenical movement. As part of this, it is committed to dialogue and engagement with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. It was on the occasion of the Alliance's General Council at Ottawa, 1982, that Pope John Paul II wrote to Dr. James McCord, at that

⁷⁰ Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, eds., *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission* (Dallas: Word, 1995), 167.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Paul G. Schrottenboer, ed., *Roman Catholicism: A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 47-49, 67, 74.

⁷³ "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," # 149.

time President of the Alliance and of Princeton Theological Seminary, expressing commitment to the dialogue. He said concisely, "the path we have walked together permits of no going back, only of further progress" (26 July 1982).⁷⁴ In his message to the General Council of Seoul in 1989, His Holiness repeated "with humble trust we must continue along the path."⁷⁵

As the new century, the new millennium, begins, may Reformed and Roman Catholics, despite their differences, find ways to "live for each other in order to be witnesses to Christ," so that the world may believe (cf. John 17:21).

⁷⁴ Cited in "Pope to International Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission, January 7, 1988," *IS* 67 (1988), 54.

⁷⁵ *Proceedings of the 22nd General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Seoul, August 15-26, 1989*, ed. Edmond Perret (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1990), 142.

A Reformed Perspective on the Ecumenical Movement

by JANE DEMPSEY DOUGLASS

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I AM HONORED to have been asked to speak this morning on the topic of Ecumenism from a Reformed perspective shaped by my work as a church historian and by my engagement with the work of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

At the heart of the ecumenical movement, as Reformed people see it, is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, together with all Christians, so that the world may believe. This gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed by the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and by the visible word of the sacraments, so that a witnessing and serving community is created, which is the church. The unity of love within the church itself witnesses to its life as the one body of Christ, with many diverse members, with Christ as its head.

Our forefather, John Calvin, followed Martin Luther in identifying the distinguishing marks of the church as the preaching of the Word of God and the observance of the sacraments. Calvin explains,

These can never exist without bringing forth fruit and prospering by God's blessing. I do not say that wherever the Word is preached there will be immediate fruit; but wherever it is received and has a fixed abode, it shows its effectiveness. Where however the preaching of the gospel is reverently heard and the sacraments are not neglected, there for the time being no deceitful or ambiguous form of the church is seen; and no one is permitted to spurn its authority, flout its warnings, resist its counsels, or make light of its chastisements—much less to desert it and break its unity. For the Lord esteems the communion of his church so highly that he counts as a traitor and apostate from Christianity anyone who arrogantly leaves any Christian society, provided it cherishes the true ministry of Word and sacraments. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.1.10)

How different is the context in which this is heard today from that of the sixteenth-century reforming struggle! Nonetheless, such a perspective still presents an obligation to search to identify where the gospel is being preached

and heard and the sacraments administered and to express our unity visibly. Sometimes the search has been passionate and insightful, sometimes clumsy and misguided, sometimes generously warm and outreaching, sometimes too narrowly focused. For our failures we must repent. The search is, however, a response to Christ's prayer for unity, a response to the Holy Spirit's call to renew the church, to heal its schisms, to witness more clearly to the one body of Christ into which we have all been baptized and which is not divided.

The challenge of the ecumenical movement, then, must be to enter into a persistent, loving, patient, and honest engagement with all those who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and administer the sacraments, seeking visible unity. We are not at liberty to select only those partners with whom we are comfortable and with whom we find greatest agreement. Rather, we are called to the ecumenical engagement with all those companions in our pilgrimage whom God has called to accompany us. We cannot know precisely what form and shape our life together may take, since we believe the Holy Spirit is continually at work among us, making all things new. We undertake this engagement in search of unity, in penitence for our wounding the body of Christ, and in obedience to the call of the Spirit, fervently hoping that our witness will be made more efficacious and that before the eschaton, we shall come to the day when we can sit together at the table spread by our common Lord, Jesus Christ.

Since this gathering is an ecumenical one, with participants of many traditions, I need to provide some further context for this perspective. I shall, first, identify the people whom I am calling Reformed and sketch a classical Reformed vision of the unity of the church. Second, I shall describe briefly how the Reformed relation to the modern ecumenical movement has been shaped by that vision. Third, I shall refer to current discussions about the future of the ecumenical movement and indicate some Reformed initiatives and responses to current dreams for the future.

I. THE REFORMED FAMILY AND ITS VISION OF THE CHURCH

The Reformed family is not a single church but rather a family of Reformed churches that are historically and theologically related to the sixteenth-century Genevan reformation, whose principal teacher was the French theologian John Calvin. Calvin was deeply shaped by participation during his student days in the Catholic humanist and biblical reforming movement represented by Erasmus and Lefèvre d'Étaples, as well as by the writings of Luther and Bucer, the chief reformer in Strasbourg. When the lines between the Catholic Church and the evangelical reforming movement in France

hardened, Calvin became a refugee and was called to serve as a teacher in the independent republic of Geneva.

Calvin's teaching and the reforms in the city attracted enormous numbers of refugees and students from abroad, creating a very international community. For most of the formative years of the Genevan reformation, none of the pastors was a citizen of Geneva. When the Academy of Geneva, the forerunner of the University of Geneva, was created to train learned citizens and leaders for Reformed churches, by intention most of the students were from other countries. In fact, Robert Kingdon argues that Geneva's resourcefulness in finding effective ways to cope with the tide of refugees and students from other countries, providing housing and practical programs of economic and social integration of the newcomers, was essential to the success of the international program of Calvinism. As the refugees and students returned to their homelands, the Calvinist vision spread.¹

Calvin was in conversation with the Swiss theologians who succeeded Zwingli, and their convergence increased. The family of Protestant churches in the Swiss cantons and Geneva came to be called Reformed, in distinction from the Lutheran churches. Calvin was also in touch with the reforming church leaders in France, central and eastern Europe, Scotland, and elsewhere, creating a wide network. The Waldensians, a reforming group dating from the twelfth century in France who survived persecution as heretics by retreating to the mountains of northern Italy, established close relationships with Geneva and were drawn into the family. English-speaking Calvinist people have till today generally called themselves Presbyterians, after the form of government by presbyters (pastors and elders), the most common type of government in Reformed churches. Most churches descended from continental European Reformed churches still retain the name Reformed, and the term is also widely used to designate the whole family related to the Genevan reformation.

The Calvinist or Reformed movement, then, from its origins was international and culturally diverse. Like other Protestants, Reformed teachers urged the use of the various vernacular languages in worship and theological writing so as to enable the common people's participation. Unlike other Protestants, the Lutherans, for example, the Reformed did not adopt a common Reformed confession. The confessions they had in common were the historic Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed. It became customary for each of the Reformed churches also to make its own confession, declaring its faith out of its own

¹ Robert M. Kingdon, "Calvinism and Social Welfare," *Calvin Theological Journal* 17 (1982): 230.

context, speaking to its special historical situation, declaring the gospel as God's already accomplished action in Jesus Christ, but also identifying the implications of the gospel for the transformation of all of life to make the reign of God visible in the world. Sometimes, daughter churches have retained their mother church's confessions along with their own. At times of crisis or change, new confessions are often made. Still, these varied confessions have been understood to proclaim the same faith. This practice of holding the ancient—ecumenical—creeds in common, while confessing anew in our varied situations according to the needs of a particular moment in history, has continued to mark the Reformed family, despite a long succession of discussions about the possibility of a common Reformed confession. Unity in diversity is a characteristic of our common life in the Reformed family.

Reformed churches in their different contexts went their own ways until the nineteenth century, when they began to meet each other on mission fields around the world and felt the need in 1875 to create an Alliance of churches in the Reformed family, the first and still the largest of the organized Protestant "Christian World Communions." The overarching theme of the early years seems to have been a search for Christian unity and for human solidarity, a search set in the context of passion for Christian witness and the worldwide mission of the church. The Alliance urged its members not to perpetuate the divisions of the West on the mission field, advocating that the newly planted churches be rooted in the local culture and that they be allowed to become independent as soon as possible and to join the Alliance as independent churches. The Alliance was self-conscious about its "catholicity" as well as its cultural diversity. From the outset, the Alliance also reflected the Calvinist ethical tradition of human solidarity, decrying slavery and the unjust treatment given to the native peoples of North America and to the laboring classes at the bottom of the economic pyramid in industrial countries.² The dual focus on the unity of the church and on human solidarity has continued to shape the life of the Alliance.

Since that time, our member churches have become even more diverse. In 1970 the International Congregational Council merged with the Alliance, creating the present World Alliance of Reformed Churches. In several countries of the South, church leaders have heeded the urgings of the early Alliance leaders and formed united churches. Some of these, like the Church of South India, united Reformed churches with churches of traditions that hold to the necessity of the historic episcopate. Presently, there are about

² See Marcel Pradervand, *A Century of Service: A History of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1875-1975* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), chaps. 1-5.

thirty united churches from North and South in the Alliance. They wish to honor their Reformed roots; the Alliance values their continuing participation and wishes to avoid their isolation. The Alliance, therefore, has an ecumenical component in its own structure. These churches, simply by their presence but also by their questions, provide an ongoing challenge to other members. Today, more than two-thirds of our 207 member churches are located in the countries of the South: Asia, Africa, and Latin America, bringing enormous cultural diversity. Though some of these are very large, some are too small to be eligible to join the World Council of Churches. Most of our member churches, however, are also participants in the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical bodies.

Outside the Alliance, there are other Reformed churches, which are less comfortable with this ecumenical orientation and for which I cannot speak. Often, their preoccupation with the purity of Reformed teaching has limited their broader participation. The Alliance feels a special obligation to reach out to these churches, to try to heal schisms within our own family.

For a classic statement of the Reformed vision of the church, we can turn to the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566,³ widely recognized as authoritative in the Reformed family. In teaching about the Trinity and Christology, the creeds and decrees of the first four ecumenical synods are affirmed, along with the Athanasian creed, as agreeing with scripture, the authority for faith (chap. 11; cf. chap. 2). In the chapter entitled "Of the Catholic and Holy Church of God, and of the One Only Head of the Church," we hear over and over the insistence that there is only one church, that it has always existed and always will, as an assembly of the faithful, the communion of saints.

And since there is always but one God, and there is one mediator between God and men [human beings], Jesus the Messiah, and one Shepherd of the whole flock, one Head of this body, and, to conclude, one Spirit, one salvation, one faith, one Testament or covenant, it necessarily follows that there is only one Church. . . . We, therefore, call this Church catholic because it is universal, scattered through all parts of the world, and extended unto all times, and is not limited to any times or places. (chap. 17)

Both the Donatists in ancient times and the "Roman clergy" in recent times were condemned for having too narrow a view of the catholic church. "Particular churches" are always to be seen in relation to the church catholic. The marks of the true church are "especially the lawful and sincere preaching

³ Quotations from the Second Helvetic Creed are taken from *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century*, ed. Arthur C. Cochrane (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966).

of the Word of God as it was delivered to us in the books of the prophets and the apostles, which all lead us unto Christ . . . the only head and foundation of the Church," and the participation of faithful believers in the sacraments instituted by Christ, worshiping one God with "one faith and one spirit." Believers "joined together with all the members of Christ by an unfeigned love . . . show that they are Christ's disciples by persevering in the bond of peace and holy unity." There is "no certain salvation outside Christ," so believers should not be separated from the true church of Christ. Nevertheless there is a recognition that circumstances, especially of repression, may make it impossible for all to participate in the sacraments. There is also a recognition that "God had some friends in the world outside the commonwealth of Israel." Though the church may at times seem to be extinct, and though there are persons in the visible church who are not true members of the church, we must be careful not to make too hasty judgments about those whom the Lord wishes to have excluded.

[W]e diligently teach that care is to be taken wherein the truth and unity of the Church chiefly lies, lest we rashly provoke and foster schisms in the church. Unity consists not in outward rites and ceremonies, but rather in the truth and unity of the catholic faith. The catholic faith is not given to us by human laws, but by Holy Scriptures, of which the Apostles' Creed is a compendium. And therefore, we read in the ancient writers that there was a manifold diversity of rites, but that they were free, and no one ever thought that the unity of the church was thereby dissolved. So we teach that the true harmony of the church consists in doctrines and in the true and harmonious preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and in rites that have been expressly delivered by the Lord,

that is, baptism and the Lord's supper. Once again, we hear the theme voiced of the unity of the church in the gospel despite diversity (chap. 17).

II. THE REFORMED RELATION TO THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Reformed Christians, both pastors and laypeople, were very much in the forefront of the early ecumenical organizations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These were largely voluntary movements made up of individual participants rather than churches, movements such as the Evangelical Alliance, the Student Volunteer Movement for missions, and the World Student Christian Federation. Leaders of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches were heavily engaged in the organizational activities leading up to the first meeting of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in

1948. They believed deeply that Christian churches sharing a common confession of Christ as Lord should work together toward making visible the unity of the church that Christ has already given. The first General Secretary, Willem Visser 't Hooft, as well as many early leaders of the WCC, such as Hendrik Kraemer and Madeleine Barot, were Reformed. Commitment of Reformed churches to the WCC continues to be strong.

The attitude of the Alliance was clearly stated at the Princeton General Council of 1954: "We believe that the deep stirring among the churches and Christian groups to surmount the barriers and to express the unity of the community of believers in accordance with the mind and will of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church . . . is of God, not men [and women], a sign of the Holy Spirit."⁴ This council also showed its intention that the Alliance should expect to learn from others in ways that would allow mutual correction:

The task of the Alliance is steadily to exhort the Reformed churches to have recourse to the Holy Scriptures; and then, if a renewed study of the Scriptures, pursued in common with brethren [and sisters] from other confessions, should disclose aspects of truth not yet apprehended, to be ready to accept them. If, on the other hand, the Reformed churches should become persuaded, through such a study of the Holy Scriptures, of an error in their own doctrinal positions, they should be ready likewise to acknowledge and abandon it.⁵

Again, at the General Council at Ottawa in 1982, the Alliance reaffirmed its commitment:

Faced by a plurality of churches throughout the world, we have a choice between claiming to be the one true church to which all others ought eventually to come and, on the other hand, seeking the fullness of Christ's Church by entering into dialogue and fellowship with those other churches which share with us the Gospel. As we may not claim a monopoly of the Gospel, there is for us no alternative to involvement in the ecumenical movement.⁶

After the formation of the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches made the decision to operate according to the "Lund principle," that churches should do together what they can do in good conscience. Therefore, the Alliance staff cooperates with the staff of the

⁴ Lukas Vischer, "The Ecumenical Commitment of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches," *Reformed World* 38 (1985): 262.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 267.

WCC and other sister organizations in the Geneva Ecumenical Center, for example, the Council of European Churches and the Lutheran World Federation. The Alliance defers to the World Council of Churches in certain areas, for example, in refugee and emergency service and in interfaith dialogue; in these areas it cooperates with the WCC and has no ongoing or comprehensive programs of its own.

The Alliance has nonetheless seen a need to continue its work to gather together the Reformed family, to bring the witness of its theological tradition to the ecumenical movement, to represent the Reformed family in international ecumenical dialogue, to work for human rights and religious freedom, to be the advocate of Reformed churches under pressure in daunting situations, and to facilitate mutual assistance among the members of the Reformed family. Since 1989 there has also been a major initiative to encourage the full partnership of women and men in God's mission in Reformed churches and in the broader society. Increasingly in Reformed churches, the full freedom of women to be called to all ministries of the church is seen as a matter of fundamental ecclesiology, not simply a matter of practice.

Since the 1960s, when the Catholic Church introduced the pattern of bilateral dialogue between churches, the Alliance has been engaged in bilateral dialogues with all the Protestant world communions, the Catholic Church, and the Orthodox churches, some over a period of many years. We have had periodic dialogues with the Catholic Church since 1970, on *The Presence of Christ in Church and World*,⁷ *The Theology of Marriage and the Problems of Mixed Marriages* (with the Lutheran World Federation),⁸ and *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*.⁹ Discussions are now in progress about the best way for the Catholic-Reformed dialogue to proceed to a new stage.

Four years ago, we brought together representatives of the various dialogue teams here at Princeton Seminary to evaluate this experience of almost thirty years of dialogue.¹⁰ There was an overwhelming sense that the experience had been a very rich and challenging one. We have learned much about other traditions as well as about ourselves. Follow-up plans were made to take next steps toward closer unity, steps that are different with relation to each dialogue partner. We were concerned that we had not yet reached one of the

⁷ (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1977).

⁸ *Final Report: Theology of Marriage and the Problems of Mixed Marriages, 1971-1977* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1978).

⁹ (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1991).

¹⁰ H. S. Wilson, ed., *Bilateral Dialogues* (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1993).

largest and fastest-growing communities, the Pentecostal churches, because there is no central international body through which to work. This year, however, we were able to initiate a dialogue with several Pentecostal groups.

One important observation made at the consultation was that the dialogues should not be focused only on traditional faith-and-order issues, ignoring other important realities in the life of the churches involved. Indeed, at the WCC Santiago Faith and Order Conference in 1993, there was a recognition that issues relating to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation are essential to the discussion of faith and order as the churches move toward fuller koinonia in faith, life, and witness.¹¹ A second observation was that especially in the early years, the international teams had tended to be made up of male European and North American theologians. The inclusion of women and representatives from other parts of the world has strengthened the work. For example, there must be representatives from Middle Eastern Reformed churches on dialogue teams with the Orthodox, because they live with Orthodoxy in a different relation than Europeans and North Americans.

The Alliance has been pleased that other ways have also been developed by which dialoguing communions have been able to accompany one another in common work. For example, we have been grateful that Monsignor John Radano has been able to be an ongoing ecumenical consultant to the Alliance as representative of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. He has attended nearly all of the Alliance Executive Committee meetings in recent years, so he knows us and our concerns very well. Many of our member churches have expressed great appreciation that through his presence, we have the possibility of helpful discussion of mutual problems. At our General Council in Hungary next summer, we will have the honor of welcoming Cardinal Cassidy and Monsignor Radano as ecumenical guests. In a new approach to collaborative work on issues that affect us all, in 1993 the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity sponsored jointly with the Alliance, along with the Lutheran World Federation, an international consultation on Christian fundamentalism. The Pontifical Council for Christian Unity also participated in the preliminary planning for a consultation jointly sponsored by the Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation on "Ethnicity and Nationalism: A Challenge to the Churches" and was represented at a consultation on "The First and Second Reformations." We welcome this approach to common work.

The Pontifical Council for Christian Unity has also invited the Reformed

¹¹ *Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order: Santiago de Compostela 1993*, Faith and Order Paper no. 164 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993).

family to share in new ways in the life of the Catholic Church. For example, we were invited to send a representative as auditor to the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1994 dealing with "The Consecrated Life and Its Role in the Church and the World." Our representative, Sister Minke de Vries, prioress of the Community of Grandchamp, a community of women related to Taizé and sharing its Reformed roots, was then invited to prepare meditations for the celebration in Rome of the Via Crucis during Holy Week of 1995. One of her sisters participated in the ceremonies. We were also invited to be represented at the preparatory committee for the Great Jubilee Celebration of the Year 2000.

So far, we have been discussing only ecumenical work at the world level. At the regional level, some Reformed churches have been able to establish concrete, new relationships. For example, in Europe since 1973, Lutheran and Reformed churches have enjoyed the experience of full communion and mutual recognition of ministries through the Leuenberg Agreement. This agreement has now been broadened and is being recognized elsewhere, for example, in Argentina. In North America, through the Caribbean and North American Area Council of the Alliance, dialogue intended to establish a similar relationship of full communion between the Reformed and Lutheran churches has been ongoing for decades and now seems to be nearing completion.

A Presbyterian church along with the Episcopal Church in the United States initiated in 1961 the bold proposal of a Consultation on Church Union (COCU) with the intention to bring about a union of the two churches. Others were invited to join the process, and a second Reformed church, the United Church of Christ, was among those who did so. The number of participants grew to nine, but the strategy has changed. Since the goal of organic union has seemed to be impossible to attain, the goal is now to create a covenant that will permit mutual recognition of sacraments and of ministries, witnessing together to common faith, and acting together in service. The covenant has been ratified by several churches, but the process is not yet complete.

III. CURRENT DISCUSSION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Our discussion so far, though severely limited by its focus on the Reformed family, gives evidence that substantial ecumenical progress has been made

over recent decades. Why then is there so much uneasiness today about the future of the ecumenical movement?

Surely, it is partly because after so many years of effort, there are few dramatic examples of change in the lifestyle of our churches at the congregational level. When the World Council of Churches was formed nearly fifty years ago, and again in the 1960s, when the Catholic church entered into ecumenical life, churches eagerly expected that visible unity of the church would be created, and there is disappointment. In fact, most people in the pews are poorly informed about the very significant progress that has been made in the ecumenical movement. Remarkable shifts in attitudes toward our brothers and sisters in other churches have taken place, creating greater openness, but so gradually that people have forgotten how life used to be.

But there are other reasons for the uneasiness. Some argue that we have never really been able to identify the proper role of the ecumenical movement and of its various participants in relation to the churches. What is the proper role of the World Council of Churches and the various national councils of churches? To what extent should they be seen as having a "privileged" role in the ecumenical movement? How do they relate to the many quite informal "ecumenical" grassroots movements that have sprung up, often around special issues like the environment or nuclear weapons or women's concerns, without any official church sponsorship? These informal groups are often vital and effective and closer to the people in the pews, who see the results of their work locally.

Others argue that ecumenical institutions are either too timid or too radical with respect to world crises and social issues. Undoubtedly, theological divisions within our churches on the proper approach by churches to social issues are as deep and difficult as on traditional faith-and-order issues.

Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the WCC, in his book *Ecumenism in Transition*, suggests that one source of confusion may be that the ecumenical movement is undergoing a "paradigm shift," moving away from what he calls the "unhistorical and dogmatic" christocentric universalism characteristic of the early years of the ecumenical movement and from its earlier understanding of mission. In more recent years,

We are being pointed away from the concept of the cosmic Christ back to the historical Jesus and his deeds, in which, as parables, new life and the reality of the kingdom of God shine forth. And we are being pointed to the work of the Holy Spirit, who as the gift of the last days, shows up our world

in its finitude, creates fellowship between the abidingly different, and precisely thus enables us to experience new life, life in its fullness.¹²

Raiser stresses the newer focus on the unity of the church as "reconciled diversity," which takes into account the actual problem of variety in the churches. He is referring not just to confessional differences but also to the new social forms of the church that have been coming into existence. He mentions base communities, action groups, and other communities.¹³ He may well also mean to include such movements as the Minjung Church and Women Church, which have been appearing widely.¹⁴ Raiser argues that the starting point has shifted from the givenness of unity to diversity, out of which unity "must be achieved, restored, preserved, or defended in face of opposing positions within the one church."¹⁵ He therefore prefers the biblical concept of "fellowship" or "communion" as more appropriate than "unity." In proposing elements of a new ecumenical paradigm, he proposes the "household" (*oikos*) and the social understanding of the Trinity.¹⁶ These two elements evoke the reality of different members in relationship. Raiser sees the changes in the ecumenical movement as signs that it is evolving and growing.

Such analyses are helpful in gaining perspective on the current uneasiness in some circles about the ecumenical movement. But one cannot avoid the fact that there are also very practical problems. To some extent, the ecumenical movement is the victim of its own success. The number of official ecumenical bodies has multiplied, so that a given church may be a member of the WCC, its own international confessional body, a regional confessional body, a regional council of churches, and a national council of churches. United churches may be related to two or three confessional bodies at both the regional and the international levels. All expect some financial support and human resources to be made available. The majority of churches active in the ecumenical movement comes from the countries of the South, where sending a delegate to an international meeting may cost several times more than a pastor's salary for a whole year. Ecumenical commitments have multiplied just as churches all around the world, including the European and American

¹² Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement?* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 78.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

¹⁴ See, e.g., H. S. Wilson and Nyambura J. Njoroge, eds. *New Wine: The Challenge of the Emerging Ecclesiologies to Church Renewal* (Geneva: World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1994).

¹⁵ Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition*, 75.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 79-111.

churches, which have heavily supported ecumenical institutions, are experiencing fiscal strictures, making participation more burdensome than formerly. The global economy plays its role in ecumenism, too.

Where then is the ecumenical movement to turn? What direction does it need to take for the future? Please understand that my comments represent my personal view and not an official position of the Alliance.

(1) From the discussion above, I would suggest that the move toward thinking about unity in terms of fellowship or communion in the gospel within which there are nonetheless differences is very congenial to the Reformed spirit I have earlier described, where a sense of unity in diversity has been important.

(2) In general, there seems to be a move toward multilateral conversation, away from the earlier bilateral conversations. Bilateral dialogues will certainly continue, and they may be important for certain purposes. But increasingly, we have to ask about the implications of the understandings we are developing with one confession for our relations with others.

(3) Many new initiatives are coming that will encourage ecumenical work. In this context one must certainly point to the 1995 encyclical of Pope John Paul II, "That All May Be One" (*Ut unum sint*). Both Catholics and Protestants have been heartened by this strong affirmation of the significance of ecumenical engagement, drawn out of Christ's own teaching. The spirit of openness to dialogue in frankness and fairness has been received with warm appreciation, as well as especially the emphasis on prayer with and for each other and the positive focus on ecumenical texts of the scriptures. While the agenda of theological issues identified there for dialogue is very substantial and challenging for ecumenical partners,¹⁷ the sense of urgency to undertake the task is of great significance. Those concerned for the ecumenical movement also note with appreciation that Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic letter concerning the preparation for the Jubilee Year of 2000, calls for examination of conscience for sins that have been detrimental to Christian unity. For preparation in 1997, he particularly notes the importance of renewed interest in the Bible and an ecumenical understanding of the meaning of baptism.¹⁸

¹⁷ Noted are the relation of scripture and tradition; the eucharist as "sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, an offering of praise to the Father, the sacrificial memorial and real presence of Christ and the sanctifying outpouring of the Holy Spirit"; ordination as sacrament; "the magisterium of the church, entrusted to the pope and the bishops in communion with him"; and the Virgin Mary. "Ut unum sint," *Origins: CNS Documentary Service* 25 (June 8, 1995): 66-67.

¹⁸ *Tertio millennio adveniente: Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Bishops, Clergy and Lay Faithful on Preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), 38-41, 48-49.

(4) Another major initiative has recently come from Konrad Raiser. He has proposed that families of churches—Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal—should begin with the new millennium a process of preparation for an ecumenical council. At least since the Uppsala WCC Assembly in 1968, there has been discussion of the possibility of such an ecumenical council, but it has been agreed that its precondition is the ability to commune together at the Lord's table. Raiser agrees, but he calls for a preconciliar process to deepen the discipline of fellowship so that such an ecumenical council could take place. Raiser refers to the Pope's invitation, in the encyclical "That All May Be One," to other churches to discuss papal primacy. Raiser argues that only in such a comprehensive conciliar process can the subject be adequately dealt with. "Individual agreements between churches unavoidably affect other partners with whom there are other relationships of dialogue."¹⁹ This proposal is quite a new departure, since it involves the church world communions, families of churches rather than the individual churches that are members of the WCC. Raiser challenged the church world communions in their upcoming general assemblies to take action on this proposal. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches' Executive Committee, at its meeting in August, acted willingly to place the matter on the agenda of our General Council next August. Raiser cautions that this may not yet be the dramatic act of reconciliation that has been hoped for, "But it would be an expression of confidence that the Holy Spirit can and will lead the churches to a reconciled fellowship."²⁰

The recognition that the WCC should develop structures to work not only with its member churches but also with the Christian world communions and other Christian communities outside its membership is embodied in a preliminary study document discussed in September at the WCC Central Committee meeting as part of its envisioning of the future of the WCC. The nature of those relationships has not yet been clarified, but Raiser's conciliar proposal seems to reflect this thinking.

(5) I have commented on the burden for churches of multiple relationships to ecumenical bodies. Responding to these concerns, the staff of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has proposed that after the year 2000, the WCC and all the world communions hold their major world assemblies in the same place at the same time, doing their major theological study together but allowing time for each of the groups to have its own business meetings. There

¹⁹ *Ecumenical News International*, June 20, 1996. See Konrad Raiser, "Überfällige, realisierbare und wünschenswerte Schritte in der Ökumene," *Ökumenischer Informationsdienst* 2 (1996): 20-23.

²⁰ *Ecumenical News International*, June 20, 1996.

has been positive response to informal discussion of this proposal, and the Alliance Executive Committee in August formally approved further exploration of the proposal. Such an assembly would, of course, be helpful in reducing the financial burdens of ecumenical participation. But it could also foster greater ecumenical sensitivity and knowledgeability in our church leaders. It would also represent a new way for the WCC to relate to the Christian world communions.

(6) Coming from a quite different perspective, one of the most common themes I hear is that the future of ecumenism is local. Sometimes, the explanation given is that people are simply rebelling against the global bureaucracy and returning to local activity that they can understand and for which leaders can be held accountable. To the extent that such an analysis depends on the assumption that people are turning inward, withdrawing from the global community, becoming isolationist, I find this a grim future. We see some parallels to this in the political world today.

Nonetheless, there is a positive sense in which I see local ecumenism as one important component of the future. If a weakness of international ecumenism today is that people in the pews cannot see the result of the efforts made, local ecumenism is flourishing and bringing a vivid sense of the life and vitality of Christian encounter across denominational lines. Local ecumenism serves as a model where congregations can become involved, feel the strength of genuine participation, see significant change in their own congregational life, and then also be better able to conceive of the significance of worldwide ecumenism. So long as ecumenical conversation and action do not touch the local churches, they are failing to achieve their purpose. I remember with a bit of awe an experience of a small town in the West where all the churches together undertook a study of the WCC document *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (1982). In a series of weekend events, people from all the churches in town gathered to discuss the document and learn about each other. Their intense engagement in the study and their excitement were remarkable. I have been told that their church life was genuinely invigorated. Projects of common work for justice in the community can be similarly transforming for those who participate with new partners from other churches.

In another sense, the ecumenical aspects of our Christian faith must be regularly made visible in all local church life. Every baptism, for example, is an opportunity to help the congregation grasp that the one being baptized is entering the church universal. I was visiting an international and interdenominational congregation in Sweden, where the world community was vividly illustrated in the diversity of dress and accent. On that Sunday a child was

baptized. Afterwards, the grandfather of the child declared with enthusiasm how delighted he was to realize that his grandchild had been baptized into a community that includes Christians in all the world, of many Christian traditions. But then he reflected soberly, "But of course that is true of all baptisms! Why did I never realize this before?" Why indeed?

Such a question turns our attention to the development of Christian identity in baptized Christians through our local programs of congregational Christian education. Clearly, our church members should have a sense of their Christian identity rooted in the local church and in their own confessional traditions, but that is insufficient. How can we help church members gain a broader sense of Christian identity rooted in the one holy catholic church, where there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism? Surely, personal contact with Christians of other lands and of other communions is essential and should be fostered with care and imagination. Strengthening our engagement with our ecumenical networks at the local, national, and international levels will facilitate these contacts, offering opportunities for many kinds of exchanges.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we turn once more to the nature of the ecumenical movement. It is not an organization but, rather, a loosely connected collection of organizations and activities responding to the movement of the Holy Spirit among us. Christians sense that the Spirit is moving us toward each other to heal old schisms and renew our life. By its nature, this renewing force wells up in our churches and in other surprising places, disrupting our familiar patterns of life, raising new questions, giving poor and marginalized people in our churches and outside them the courage to cry out for justice. The very creation itself seems now to be crying out for justice.

Not all cries in the church or the world today are from the urging of the Holy Spirit. We must try with prayer and the guidance of the scriptures to discover what is of God. The scriptures tell us that the reign of Christ is a reign of unity, of peace and love, but also of justice, of wholeness for the entire restored creation. The modern ecumenical movement, bringing together the movements toward unity from "faith and order" and "life and work," calls for a profound renewal of the church and its message for the world.

Reformed people have come to prize the seventeenth-century dictum "The church reformed according to the word of God is always in need of reformation." This reminder of the fallibility of our institutions does not necessarily make us more eager to change than others! But it shapes our

perspective on the ecumenical movement. The institutions we have created will have to be continually renovated as our vision grows and our churches change. The WCC is now engaged in such revisioning, and others will do so. It seems clear that many of our structures are not largely, broadly enough conceived for the task to be done, though they may have grown too big in size and cost.²¹ They must be hospitable to the whole family of God, enabling the family members in their diversity to address with integrity the whole range of issues that divide us, issues of Christology and ecclesiology, issues of culture, race, and gender, issues of social justice and the integrity of creation. Our reconciliation is integrally related to our witness to the world, the church's calling.

Structures themselves, however, do not reconcile. Faithful Christians must design and inhabit those structures. While not losing the momentum of progress already made among churches active in the ecumenical movement, we must reach out to include churches now on the margins. We also need to identify and respect the vital voluntary reforming movements outside formal structures, asking what word of God they may have for the churches. It was the energy of movements like these that launched the modern ecumenical movement a century ago. Yet we must not lose our focus on the role of the churches themselves in expressing the mutual interdependence of the members of the body of Christ. All churches are constrained by the gospel to work for the full mutual recognition that will permit us to sit together at the table of our Lord.

The methods of work of the ecumenical movement will surely continue to change, but the Holy Spirit's call to the churches for unity and renewal remains ever present to us. May God give us grace, courage, and wisdom to respond faithfully.

²¹ This is a common theme in current writing about the ecumenical movement. In addition to Raiser, see, e.g., Teresa Berger, "Ecumenism: Postconfessional? Consciously Contextual?" *Theology Today* 53 (1996): 213-19; S. Mark Heim, "The Next Ecumenical Movement," *The Christian Century* 113 (August 14-26, 1996): 780-83; Lewis S. Mudge, *The Sense of a People: Toward a Church for the Human Future* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992); idem, "Renewing the Ecumenical Vision," *Theology and Worship Occasional Paper no. 7* (Louisville: Presbyterian Church [U.S.A.], n.d.).

Practical Theology as Argument, Rhetoric, and Conversation

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I AM FOND of telling my graduate students: The only way to get to water is by digging one deep hole, not lots of little ones. These words have come back to haunt me as I have prepared this lecture, for I am saying a little about a lot. I have taken heart from the perspective that gradually has emerged in the writing of this lecture. In it, I will be developing a communicative model of rationality and using this model to describe practical theology. Looking at rationality as a form of communication means that you do not have to say everything all at once. There is time later for further explanation and defense in response to the challenges and insights of others. Let us, then, begin a process of communication that is not intended to end here but to be the first step in an unfolding conversation.

I. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY: THE INHERITED PROBLEMATIC

Practical theology as a distinct branch of theology first appeared during the early modern period in the context of the research university.¹ Its emergence in this context proved to be problematic. From the outset, the modern research university was committed to a model of rationality in which science was paradigmatic. Whether science was construed broadly as *Wissenschaft* or more narrowly as empirical research, its paradigmatic status resulted in a view of scholarship based on objectivity, factuality, and autonomy. This led to the rejection of long-standing models of practical reason inherited from the

¹ Dietrich Rössler, *Grundriß der Praktischen Theologie*, 2d ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), chaps. 1–3; Richard Osmer, *A Teachable Spirit: Recovering the Teaching Office in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), chap. 7; Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), chaps. 3–5.

classical tradition, models found in rhetoric, law, the pastoral arts, and other fields. These were replaced with a technologized model of practical reason in which its work was construed instrumentally, as applying research to real life settings.

It is precisely this highly diminished, instrumental understanding of practical reason which has shaped the scope and purpose of practical theology throughout the modern period. The modern paradigm of practical theology has viewed its work as practical *application*, not research, and as focusing on the *life of the church*, especially the *practical tasks of the clergy*.² With the rise of the social sciences, however, practical theology faced a question that had long confronted the other theological disciplines: What is the relationship between its rational orientation as a form of theology and those of its closest, nontheological dialogue partners? In many cases, it followed the course taken by other theological disciplines and defined its constructive task primarily in terms of the research programs of these cognate fields. What it gained in research orientation, it lost in terms of theological identity as catechetics was transformed into religious education, pastoral care into pastoral psychology, preaching into practical hermeneutics, and church discipline into organizational management.

The past three decades have seen the first steps in the emergence of a new paradigm of practical theology on an international scale.³ This emerging paradigm presses beyond the way practical theology has been construed throughout the modern period.⁴ It gives priority to ongoing research and breaks the boundaries of the clerical paradigm. What this emerging paradigm has not yet addressed in a compelling manner is the issue just indicated: the

² Edward Farley aptly refers to this as the clerical paradigm (see "Theology and Practice Outside the Clerical Paradigm," in *Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Theology, Church, and World*, ed. D. Browning [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983], 21-41).

³ Hans van der Ven, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach* (Kampen, The Netherlands: J.H. Kok, 1993); Gert Otto, *Grundlegung der Praktischen Theologie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1986); Don Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Duncan Forrester, "Divinity in Use and Practice," in *Theology and Practice*, ed. D. Forrester (London: Epworth, 1990); Charles Gerkin, *Widening the Horizons: Pastoral Responses to a Fragmented Society* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986).

⁴ It seems best to view practical theology as in pre-paradigmatic state as characterized by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). This is a time of transition in which the old patterns have largely been discredited and discarded by the most important and innovative thinking in a field, while a new consensus about how the field should proceed has not yet been achieved. Kuhn's identification of a "lag time" between the demise of an old paradigm and its replacement by a new is particularly applicable to practical theology. In large measure, seminary and divinity school departments remain structured along the older, encyclopedic lines, while the most influential writing in the field no longer operates in terms of the clerical paradigm. If Thomas Kuhn is right, a new paradigm will come to be widely accepted only if it presents a compelling alternative to the older approach.

relationship of practical theology's rational orientation as a form of theology to those of its closest dialogue partners. This is the issue I will address this afternoon. I will begin by exploring a communicative model of rationality and the way it has impacted three, highly influential models of practical reason: utilitarianism, neo-Aristotelianism, and neo-Kantianism. This exploration will place the issue directly before us: What is the relationship between these understandings of practical reason and that of practical theology?

II. PRACTICAL REASON IN A COMMUNICATIVE MODEL OF RATIONALITY

Broadly speaking, the emergence of a communicative model of rationality is closely related to the various "turns" in twentieth-century philosophy away from the individual subject's consciousness to language, hermeneutics, and praxis. Rationality has come to be viewed as an intersubjective practice, a process of communication in which validity claims are explored through the exchange of good reasons. Drawing on the work of Stephen Toulmin, Chaim Perelman, Jürgen Habermas, and others, I will describe a model of rationality in which three dimensions are prominent: *argument*, *rhetoric*, and *ethics*.⁵ Let me begin by briefly describing each dimension.

Argument, here, is viewed as a form of rational communication in which sustained conflict is willingly engaged and valued. At the very heart of argument is *dialectic*: the point-counterpoint of challenge and defense in the justification of explicit claims.⁶ In a communicative model of rationality, it may be best to use the term "argumentation" rather than "argument," for it is conceptualized primarily as a process, not a product.⁷ While argumentation includes the standard elements identified by Toulmin and others—claims, grounds, warrants, qualifiers, and backing—these are conceptualized as

⁵ Each of these persons has written a considerable amount of material. The most important texts in terms of their theories of communicative rationality are as follows: Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958); Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969); and Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols., trans. T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984-87).

⁶ James Freeman, *Dialectics and the Macrostructure of Arguments: A Theory of Argument Structure* (New York: Foris Publications, 1991); Nicholas Rescher, *Dialectics: A Controversy-Oriented Approach to the Theory of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977). While Charles Willard does not place emphasis on the justification of explicit claims, he offers an important account of the conflict orientation of argumentation in *A Theory of Argumentation* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989).

⁷ Daniel O'Keefe, "The Concepts of Argument and Arguing," in *Advances in Argumentation Theory and Research*, ed. R. Cox and C. Willard (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 3-23; Joseph Wenzel, "Cultivating Practical Reason: Argumentation Theory in Postmodernity," in *Argument and the Postmodern Challenge*, ed. R. McKersrow (Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association, 1993).

messages within an unfolding process of communication. As such, argumentation is not identified primarily with the finished product—the completed paper or book, the point of view prevailing at the end of a critical discussion. It is more closely identified with the communicative process itself, the processes by which claims are raised, evidence brought forward, and warrants offered.

Many contemporary argument theorists, moreover, portray the processes of rational communication as varying markedly from one context to another.⁸ The way argumentation takes place in a court of law is not the same as in an academic journal or a church committee. Different argument fields develop different procedures to assert and establish claims, depending on the subject being considered and the purpose of argumentation in that particular forum. The legal system, for example, has developed a complex set of procedures to try and appeal cases. Lawyers argue in ways that are quite different from the kinds of arguments constructed by a literary critic writing for *The New Yorker* or a scientist for *The New England Journal of Medicine*. Indeed, a scientist who is serving as an expert witness in a legal case had better know the difference between argumentation appropriate to a scientific journal and that appropriate to testimony before a jury of nonspecialists. The sort of argumentative rationality suitable to one setting is not really appropriate in another.

In spite of this procedural variability from field to field, all forms of argumentation share a basic epistemic value: the importance of establishing truth in situations of conflict through fair and open communicative processes. Whether its outcome is conceptualized as the achievement of consensus or the enlargement of the participants' thinking, argumentation is predicated on a valuing of socially regulated conflict that can settle differences through rational means rather than violence or manipulation. Research indicates that argumentation does not come easily or naturally to most people.⁹ It depends on institutions and communities that teach it and practice it in an ongoing manner.

This brings us to the second element of the communicative model of rationality being developed here: *rhetoric*.¹⁰ Rhetoric today is used both

⁸ Stephen Toulmin, *An Introduction to Reasoning* (New York: Macmillan, 1979), part b; Charles Willard, "Argument Fields," in *Advances in Argumentation Theory and Research*, ed. Cox and Willard, 24–77.

⁹ Willard reports research that indicates that most people engage in "conversational repair" when conflict emerges instead of orienting themselves toward argumentation, smoothing over elements of disagreement as quickly as possible in order to patch up the relationship (*Theory of Argumentation*, 43, 82–89).

¹⁰ A helpful introduction to rhetoric's broadened scope is *The Rhetorical Turn: Invention and Persuasion in the Conduct of Inquiry*, ed. H. Simons (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). See also Calvin Schrag, "Rhetoric Resituated at the End of Philosophy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 164–74; and Ernesto Grass, "Can Rhetoric Provide a

broadly and narrowly.¹¹ In the broadest sense, it is viewed as a comprehensive theory of persuasive discourse. More narrowly, it is a particular field, concerned with persuasive communication in public speech, debate, and the media. My focus in this section is rhetoric in the broad sense.

Broadly defined, rhetoric focuses on the persuasive dimension of all human communication. It includes an examination of the factors that make discourse persuasive. This has come to involve insights generated by a number of different fields: linguistics, developmental psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, communication studies, and literary criticism. Within this broad-ranging scope, the use of language in persuasion typically receives greatest attention. As Kenneth Burke puts it, rhetoric is "the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols."¹² Of special interest is the way this expanded understanding of rhetoric has come to portray rationality itself, including argumentative rationality, as inherently rhetorical.¹³ Arguments seek to persuade. They are designed to induce an audience to adhere to the claims being made. Once the persuasive dimension of rational communication is acknowledged, it alters the way rhetoric and rationality traditionally have been viewed as related.¹⁴

In most of Western philosophy and science, rationality in one of its forms—be it formal logic or scientific method—has been portrayed as setting forth rules by which truth is established. Rhetoric, then, is "added" to rational inquiry as a way of communicating this already-established truth to different

New Basis for Philosophizing? The Humanist Tradition," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 11, no. 1 (1978): 1-96.

¹¹ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Rhetorical Act*, 2d ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 1996), chap. 1.

¹² Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969),

43.
¹³ Calvin Schrag, *The Resources of Rationality: A Response to the Postmodern Challenge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); J. Nelson, A. Megill, and D. McCloskey, eds., *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences: Language and Argument in Scholarship and Public Affairs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); James Crosswhite, *The Rhetoric of Reason: Writing and the Attractions of Argument* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).

¹⁴ The relationship between rhetoric and rationality has been a rocky one since the emergence of rhetoric in ancient Greece. Plato gave paradigmatic expression to the philosophical tradition's long-standing animosity toward rhetoric when he described it in the *Georgias* as the art of persuading the masses to accept arbitrary truths on the basis of social convention with no real interest in the philosophical task of establishing true knowledge on the basis of the most rigorous rational means available. Teachers and theoreticians of rhetoric as early as Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintillian rejected this understanding of rhetoric and argued that true rhetoric not only appealed to its audience's capacities for reasoning and judgment but had its own constructive contribution to make in the production of rational knowledge.

audiences, adding nothing to its discovery or invention.¹⁵ Contemporary theories of rhetoric working within the framework of a communicative model of rationality essentially reverse this relationship. Rationality as a form of communicative action is dependent on the rhetorical norms that a discourse community holds, norms embedded in its genres, language, and epistemic values.¹⁶ It is these rhetorical norms that will determine what reasons will be persuasive to the audience that is being addressed. Rationality, as such, is no longer conceptualized as a timeless set of procedures that can be transported from context to context. It is dependent on the rhetorical norms by which a community produces and assesses knowledge.

Recall the example given a moment ago in our discussion of argumentation. A scientist serving as an expert witness will be persuasive only if she knows the difference between the kind of argumentation appropriate to a scientific journal and that appropriate to courtroom testimony. Complex statistical analysis and a highly technical justification of her research methodology is unlikely to persuade a jury of nonspecialists. Indeed, recent research on courtroom argumentation has discovered that narrative rationality is the most persuasive in this setting.¹⁷ The lawyer who is able to weave the various bits of evidence presented into a coherent narrative that rings true to the jurors' experience is the one most likely to win the case.

¹⁵ This, of course, was rejected from the outset by Isocrates, Cicero, and others, who found a prominent place for rhetorical invention in their theories. They did so, however, within a framework that granted the contingent reasoning of rhetorical invention a secondary status in comparison to that of science, which established eternal, unchanging truths.

¹⁶ The concept "rhetorical norms" comes from Thomas Farrell, *Norms of Rhetorical Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Two key assumptions not explicitly explored in this lecture are assumed in this statement. One is the shift from language viewed along structuralist lines as a system of signs to discourse in which language is viewed as utterance. The concept "discourse" brings into focus the way language "performs," that is, is designed to achieve certain effects on an audience. This is a shift to the pragmatics of communication. Closely related is the concept "discourse community." Without denying the variety and conflict present in a community, it brings into focus the way that discourse is structured by forms that are socially shared and allow communicators to activate a common set of expectations. This is explored more fully below, in the concept "genre." For a discussion of discourse, see Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983); and Bennett Rafoth, "The Concept of Discourse Community: Descriptive and Explanatory Adequacy," in *A Sense of Audience in Written Communication*, ed. G. Kirsch and D. Roen (London: Sage, 1990), 140-52.

¹⁷ Lance Bennett and Marth Feldman, *Reconstructing Reality in the Courtroom* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1981), 5, 97. Narrative's relationship to argumentation and persuasion receives special attention in Thomas Hollihan and Kevin Baaske, *Arguments and Arguing: The Products and Process of Human Decision Making* (New York: St. Martin's, 1994). See also Donald Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

Rhetorical norms, thus, determine what counts as a good reason and what will be persuasive in a given setting. Increasingly, I have come to believe that rhetorical genres are particularly important in this regard.¹⁸ Genre knowledge enables persons engaged in rational communication to orient themselves to one another and to structure their unfolding communication along a common set of expectations. It determines what counts as good reasons and how they are established.¹⁹ Persuasion, Kenneth Burke once noted, is dependent on the arousal and fulfillment of desire. It is the appropriate exercise of genre knowledge that allows this to take place.

The implications of this rhetorical understanding of rationality are far-reaching. It means that argument itself is only one of the forms rationality can take. Rhetoric, as such, includes argument, but it also includes other forms of rational communication. Different cultures have developed markedly different genres to establish good reasons, genres that are not conflict oriented or dependent on the dialectic of challenge and response. Native Americans, for example, make extensive use of collaborative narratization in solving problems.²⁰ Recent research on the psychological development of girls and women, likewise, reveals that many of them prefer collaborative forms of

¹⁸ The term "rhetorical genre" signals a shift from a literary to a rhetorical and communicative perspective. See Carolyn Miller's widely influential essay "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 151-67. In this essay, she reconceptualizes genre in dialogue with Schutz's and Luckmann's construct of typification in social interaction. Also important to this discussion is Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson's description of a rhetorical genre as a fusion of substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics. Genre knowledge, they argue, allows persons to classify occasions and determine the substance and styles appropriate to that occasion. See *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action*, ed. Campbell and Jamieson (Falls Church, VA: Speech Communication Association, 1993). For a more general discussion, see M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. V. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986). The importance of genre in education is the focus of *The Place of Genre in Learning: Current Debates*, ed. I. Reid (Deakin, Australia: Deakin University Press, 1987).

¹⁹ Recent research on the experimental lab report, for example, has traced the ways the content and form of this genre have remained relatively stable for extended periods of time and then shifted in conjunction with changing views of science. See Charles Bazerman, *Shaping Written Knowledge: The Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); and Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin, *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication: Cognition/Culture/Power* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995).

²⁰ Susan Philips describes the way this rational style of communication is undercut by the imposition of Anglo norms in "Participant Structures and Communicative Competence: Warm Springs Children in Community and Classroom," in *Functions of Language in the Classroom*, ed. C. Cazden, V. John, and D. Hymes (New York: Teachers College Press, 1972). See the fine discussion of this issue in C.A. Bowers and David Flinders, *Responsive Teaching: An Ecological Approach to Classroom Patterns of Language, Culture, and Thought* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), chaps. 2, 3, 5, 6.

rational communication in education, not the "doubting game" of traditional classroom argumentation.²¹

In the communicative model of rationality being developed here, thus, argumentation is viewed as an important, but not exclusive, form of rational communication. It is kept in the foreground of my model because of the way it makes explicit the reality of conflict in social life and the importance of developing forums and genres that allow these conflicts to be resolved in a fair and open manner. In other words, it is my commitment to the epistemic values of argumentation that leads me to grant argumentation an important role.

I have used the concept "epistemic values" several times already in this lecture, and I would like to unpack what is meant by this concept at this point. It leads us directly to the final dimension of the model of rationality being developed here: an *ethical ideal* providing the standard by which reasons are assessed. Epistemic values are those values that influence the way knowledge is constructed and evaluated in the rational communication of a particular discourse community. They mediate between the purpose of a community and the practices by which its rational communication takes place.²² Most of the time, epistemic values operate implicitly, but when challenged, they are defended in a normative account that does two things.²³ First, it offers a description of the communicative competencies, intellectual capacities, and dispositions that must be present if persons are to participate effectively in the rational communication of a community or field. These are sometimes referred to as the "higher order" conditions of rational communication. Second, it describes the purpose of the community or field in relation to other areas of life. A rationale of rational communication in this sphere is thereby formed.

²¹ Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic, 1986), chaps. 9-10.

²² For a discussion of the normative, ethical dimensions of rationality, see the following: Philip Clayton and Steven Knapp, "Ethics and Rationality," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 30, no. 2 (April 1993); Nicholas Rescher, *Rationality: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Nature and the Rationale of Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); Walter Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987); Hollihan and Baaske, *Arguments and Arguing*, chap. 1; Frans H. Van Eemeren et al., *Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), chap. 2; and Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 1:75-101.

²³ See Habermas' discussion of the idealization implicit in C.S. Peirce's understanding of the scientific community and its orientation toward consensus in *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*, trans. C. Cronin (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 50-52.

Let me offer an example in terms of our own practice as teachers. The way we teach, the reading assignments we make, and our evaluation of our students are dependent on our understanding of the purpose of theological education and the epistemic values that flow from this purpose. Often, there is a debate in seminary communities like our own about the ethical ideal that should guide theological education.²⁴ Should it be governed by the research orientation of the modern university or by the cultural-transmission orientation of a classical, liberal arts education? The former views the seminary as a producer of original knowledge; the latter, as a place where students are initiated into the *paideia* of a particular tradition. The epistemic values of the research university revolve around critical, independent thinking, leading us to teach our students how to assess knowledge critically and to articulate their own positions, going beyond merely citing authorities in their papers. In contrast, the epistemic values of a liberal arts education revolve around the internalization of a definitive cultural inheritance. Originality and critical thinking are far less important than learning how to think out of a tradition. What is important is imitating and appropriating the authoritative models it offers. My point is this: The rational orientation and epistemic values we bring to our teaching are informed by our understanding of the purpose of the theological education. This influences the kind of thinking we reward or discourage. It influences the teaching and writing genres we employ. In short, it influences our rhetorical norms.

There are two important aspects of the ethical dimension of the communicative model of rationality being developed here that can only be pointed to briefly. The first is the fact that the ethical ideal informing rational communication can be justified in a wide range of ways. Acknowledging the rhetorical nature of rationality might, on the surface, seem to point to the most relativistic forms of social constructivism. This need not be the case. It is quite possible to argue at the level of ethical justification that some forms of rationality are more adequate to the purposes of a community and the object under investigation than others. Acknowledgment of the diversity of rhetorical norms does not necessarily mean that all rhetorical norms are equally good. A second point is the fact that relations of power are inevitably implicated in the normative orientation of rational communication. Some forms of rational communication are privileged; others are ruled out. Recall the body of research on women's development mentioned above. Privileging argumentative rationality exclusively in the classroom has the effect of ruling

²⁴ David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

out the collaborative styles of thinking and learning that are preferred by many girls and women. Taken seriously, this research would challenge well-established practices of rational communication and, perhaps, even the ethical ideal on which they are based.

Three elements of a communicative model of rationality have been identified: argument, rhetoric, and ethics. Using the model I have just developed, I would like to describe the turn toward communicative rationality as it has affected three traditions of practical philosophy that have been widely influential in recent years: utilitarianism, neo-Aristotelianism, and neo-Kantianism.²⁵ Each offers a very different model of practical reason. Their portrayal of its argumentation and rhetorical norms vary significantly in light of their ethical ideal.

Utilitarianism has long been associated with a model of practical reason in which rationality is viewed as a form of calculation oriented toward determining the most effective ways of achieving the greatest number of an individual's or group's contingent desires.²⁶ In its earliest formulations, this sort of reasoning was portrayed in highly individualistic terms. In recent years, this has been modified significantly by utilitarianism's appropriation of a communicative model of rationality based on an exchange theory of utility. Individual actors are now viewed as involved in exchanging social and material goods. The ethical ideal, as such, is construed in social terms, as the equitable exchange of goods. How is an equitable exchange determined? Contemporary utilitarians like Russell Hardin follow the line of reasoning traditionally offered by this school of thought, arguing that an equitable exchange can only be determined by the actors involved.²⁷ They refuse to develop a substantive theory of value that can be used to determine which goods should take precedence over others. This means that a fair exchange of goods cannot be determined in advance but must be established in each particular context.

²⁵ By practical philosophy, I mean a family of subject areas in philosophy that have been treated under the notion of practical reason and charged with the responsibility of providing reasons for action. The constitutive question of practical philosophy, as such, is What shall I do? or What shall we do? Aristotle's distinction between *theoria* and *praxis* is the Ur-source of this special focus in philosophy. He portrayed *theoria* as dealing with matters of unchanging truth and *praxis*, with matters of the contingent, changing world. The rationality of *praxis* was particular, local, timely, and oral (Stephen Toulmin, "The Recovery of Practical Philosophy," *The American Scholar* 57 [Spring 1988]: 337-52).

²⁶ Throughout this discussion of utilitarianism, I am drawing on the following sources for my characterization: Russell Hardin, *Morality within the Limits of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); and Joseph Allen, *Love and Conflict: A Covenantal Model of Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984). The latter does a particularly fine job of contrasting the contractual orientation of certain forms of utilitarianism with the conventional orientation of Christian ethics.

²⁷ Hardin, *Morality within the Limits of Reason*, chap. 5.

This open-ended, context-dependent understanding of the equitable exchange of goods leads utilitarianism to adopt the rhetoric of contractual negotiation and strategic interaction.²⁸ The process of exchange is portrayed as a matter of negotiating a settlement that adjudicates the desires of the parties involved. Argumentation in this framework takes the form of strategic, problem-solving rationality. The parties involved work together to problematize their differences, to assess available resources and possible means of action, and to negotiate a mutually satisfying solution. Evaluation of the consequences of implementing a negotiated course of action is particularly important, for it cannot be determined in advance which values will actually be achieved and which will fall by the wayside due to unexpected blocking forces.

A number of well-established genres teach and practice this style of moral reasoning on a regular basis in our society. Family and marriage therapy, for example, frequently revolve around helping clients get in touch with their needs, communicating these clearly to one another, and negotiating a course of action that seems fair to all involved.²⁹ As therapy progresses, sessions look back at how things have gone the previous week, evaluating the consequences of implementing a particular therapeutic plan.

It is the unwillingness of utilitarianism to develop a theory of value that has been the target of its harshest critics. Suppose a couple comes to therapy because the husband strongly desires sadomasochistic forms of sex, which his wife finds repulsive. Then what? Lacking a normative theory of value makes it impossible for the therapist to appeal to anything outside of the negotiation process. Often, however, this is not what really happens. The therapist smuggles in a normative notion of "healthy" sexuality and subtly influences the couple in one direction or another. This notion of sexuality, however, is never shared with the couple in a forthright manner and made the subject of explicit argumentation. It is precisely the unwillingness of utilitarianism to reflect directly on substantive notions of the Good that separates it most clearly from neo-Aristotelian models of practical reason.³⁰ Practical reason,

²⁸ I am primarily focusing on the contractual rhetoric of utilitarianism, for it is the most widely influential, especially in the social sciences. For a discussion of strategic interaction, see Hardin, *Morality within the Limits of Reason*, chap. 1.

²⁹ A particularly clear example of this orientation, which combines communication with a version of utilitarianism, is William Lederer and Don Jackson, *The Mirages of Marriage* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986). Research indicating that this style of reasoning, along with expressive individualism, is widely used in therapeutic contexts is found in Robert Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 123-41.

³⁰ I am focusing here primarily on the American and Canadian versions of this tradition, not the German, which has tended to be closely associated with a neoconservative political

neo-Aristotelians like Alasdair MacIntyre argue, can only work on the basis of a normative vision of the Good.³¹

This does not mean that neo-Aristotelianism is not concerned with reflection on the contingencies of particular situations. Harking back to Aristotle's understanding of *praxis* and the rationality appropriate to this realm of life, it, too, views practical reason as oriented toward the guidance of the contingent affairs of the changing world.³² Its orientation to particular situations, however, is markedly different than that of utilitarianism. Rather than asking "What is the fairest exchange of goods that can be negotiated by the parties involved?" neo-Aristotelianism asks "What actions in this situation will allow me as an individual and us as a group to become the sort of person and community consistent with our understanding of the Good?" What is at stake in discrete decisions in particular situations is not merely the consequences that emerge in that context but the sort of character I will acquire and the sort of life we will share.

This understanding of the ethical ideal leads neo-Aristotelianism to adopt the rhetoric of virtue and practice. Virtues are those excellences of thought and action which persons acquire through their participation in a community's practices over time.³³ They include elements of knowledge and skill that are internalized and become a part of the habitus of a person's character. Practices are socially shared activities of a community that embody some aspect of its vision of the Good. The knowledge and skills they teach can only be acquired by firsthand participation, from the inside. It not possible to learn what prayer involves, for example, except by praying. If prayer truly is a practice in a community, then individuals will not be left to their own devices to discover how and what to pray. They will be introduced to long-standing traditions of prayer, which will provide them with a language, a set of forms, and persons experienced in this practice.

This understanding of the relationship between virtue and practice has important consequences for the way neo-Aristotelianism conceptualizes practical reason and the argumentation it employs. As a form of prudential reasoning, practical reason is a virtue of the individual that plays an extremely

agenda. See Herbert Schnadelback, "What is Neo-Aristotelianism?" *Praxis International* 7 (1988): 225-37.

³¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); and idem, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

³² See Nicholas Lobkowitz's discussion of *praxis* in *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (New York: University Press of America, 1967), chaps. 1-4.

³³ Romanus Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), chaps. 1-3.

important "unitive" function in relation to other virtues. It coordinates the excellences of thought and skill necessary for a discerning understanding of the particularities of the situation at hand, a sense of what is at stake morally, and a grasp of how best to proceed.³⁴ As such, practical reason is based on the wisdom of the moral actor. As an intellectual and moral virtue, however, it can only be acquired through participation in the practices of the community and the wisdom they make available. Morally shallow and fragmented communities will form morally shallow and fragmented persons, making the cultivation and practice of practical reasoning difficult.

It is precisely the way neo-Aristotelianism defines practical reason in terms of the moral vision and practices of particular communities that is subject to criticism by contemporary neo-Kantianism. In a highly pluralistic society, neo-Aristotelians seem to leave us bereft of a notion of practical reason that can be employed by persons from different traditions to address their common social problems. What happens to practical reason in public life? Are we left with the all-too-prevalent scenario of persons talking past one another or at one another without any real possibility of rational communication that can achieve understanding? It is precisely this situation that is addressed by the understanding of practical reason articulated in the neo-Kantian perspective of Jürgen Habermas.³⁵ He builds on Kant's fundamental insight about the importance of formulating an understanding of practical reason that is not dependent on the moral vision of any particular community. He transforms Kant's universalism in the direction of a communicative model of rationality.

In his two-volume masterpiece *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas grounds his theory of argumentation in an analysis of the kind of communication that is oriented toward the achievement of mutual understanding. Persons who engage in this sort of communication, he believes, are committing themselves to clarifying and defending through argumentation the claims they implicitly are putting forth. Habermas believes that three different types of claims can be made in this sort of communicative action: empirical factual, moral, and aesthetic. Practical reason is the sort of argumentation used to redeem the validity of moral claims. Its focus is on the just regulation of social interaction in which parties cannot appeal to a shared

³⁴ *Ibid.*, chap. 4.

³⁵ Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Seyla Benhabib has built on Habermas' perspective in helpful ways in *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992). She, however, is best viewed as Hegelian, as seen in her book *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

set of ethical values or beliefs. How, in such situations, can persons form norms that are just for all concerned?

Habermas answers this question by reformulating Kant's categorical imperative along the lines of a discourse ethic that describes the conditions under which fair and open moral argumentation can take place.³⁶ He summarizes its fundamental principle as follows: "only moral rules that could win the assent of all affected as participants in a practical discourse can claim validity."³⁷ There are two sides to his characterization of this ethic.³⁸ The first is universal moral respect. All parties in argumentation must be viewed as autonomous sources of claims and criticisms with access to every aspect of the argument process. The second aspect of his discourse ethic is egalitarian reciprocity. This is the ability and willingness to enter into the perspectives of all others involved in argumentation and to grant their point of view real moral weight. Practical reason, in short, is a form of argumentative communication in situations of social conflict from the "moral point of view," a point of view characterized by universal respect for the participants and a willingness to reason from their perspective.

This characterization of practical reason leads Habermas to adopt the rhetoric of justice and critique. On the basis of this normative concept of practical moral argumentation, he describes procedures that allow for the construction of just moral norms. When Protestant fundamentalists and homosexual parents come into conflict over what sex-education curriculum ought be used in a public school, Habermas describes the kind of discourse that would need to take place for justice to have a chance. The argumentation by which curriculum decisions is made would have to be fair and open, and the parties would have to be willing to engage one another's arguments with seriousness and respect. This idealized model of argumentation, moreover, affords a critical perspective on the way moral norms and policies are formed in real life settings and the way broader social trends inhibit the practice of moral argumentation in various spheres of life.³⁹ If Protestant fundamentalists were to take over a local school board, refuse to allow consideration of

³⁶ Habermas' most important discussions of his discourse ethic are found in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. C. Lenhardt and S. Nicholsen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990); and *Justification and Application*. For a critical discussion of this approach, see S. Benhabib and F. Dallmayr, eds. *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

³⁷ Habermas, *Justification and Application*, 50.

³⁸ See Seyla Benhabib's helpful discussion of Habermas' discourse ethic in her *Situating the Self*, introduction and chap. 1.

³⁹ Particularly powerful in this regard is Habermas' description of the "colonization" of the lifeworld by forms of instrumental reason appropriate to the marketplace. See *Communicative Action*, vol. 2, parts 6 and 8.

empirical evidence about the psychological health of the children of gay parents, and turn their own set of beliefs into legal policy, then practical moral argumentation would not take place. Parties affected by the establishment of curriculum choices would not be treated as worthy of participation in the argumentation by which these choices were made, nor would their point of view be granted moral weight.

III. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AS ARGUMENT, RHETORIC, AND CONVERSATION

Each of these models of practical theology has certain things to commend it. As we turn directly to practical theology, we are immediately confronted with our original question: What is the relationship between practical theological rationality and the models of practical reason just examined?⁴⁰ Building on the communicative model of rationality developed above, I find the image of conversation to be helpful in answering this question. Practical theology and Christian ethics are engaged in a conversation with practical philosophy, a conversation that has been viewed in a variety of ways in recent years.

One approach views the conversation as a matter of finding the right dialogue partner in practical philosophy and working within the framework it provides. Gert Otto, for example, in practical theology, has adopted Jürgen Habermas' understanding of practical reason and portrays practical theology within the framework of critical social theory.⁴¹ Stanley Hauerwas, in Christian ethics, takes over the neo-Aristotelian model of Alasdair MacIntyre and uses it to frame his description of Christian virtues and practices.⁴² In

⁴⁰ In large measure, this is a question of interdisciplinary method: the relationship between theology and nontheological disciplines. While it has not always been cast in exactly these terms, theology has faced the question of the relationship between the knowledge of faith and the knowledge of culture almost from the beginning. Across the centuries, its greatest theologians have conceptualized this relationship in a variety of ways. Augustine and the Cappadocians used the image of "robbing" the Egyptians, bringing the treasures of culture into the church but putting them to a new, fundamentally different use. Luther portrayed philosophy as playing blind man's bluff, reaching out to grasp ultimate truth that it really cannot see. Karl Barth used the image of annexation, likening theology's relationship to ethics to the Israelites' invasion of Canaan, recovering land that originally belonged to it (Nigel Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits: Karl Barth's Ethics* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1993], 153).

⁴¹ Otto, *Grundlegung der Praktischen Theologie*. Similarly, Paul Lakeland adopts Habermas' discourse ethic to describe the social teachings of the Catholic Church (*Theology and Critical Theory: The Discourse of the Church* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1990]).

⁴² Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); idem, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1975). It is easy to overlook this methodological move by focusing exclusively on Hauerwas'

both cases, the conversation is one in which practical philosophy sets the terms and practical theology or Christian ethics works within these terms.

A second approach views the conversation as one in which both partners contribute on an equal basis, bringing their own insights, questions, and criticisms. The conversation partners are different at the end of the dialogue than they were at the beginning. This position is best illustrated in practical theology by the revisionist approach of Don Browning, who brings neo-Kantian ethics and an interesting synthesis of Gadamerian hermeneutics and Jamesian pragmatism into conversation with Reinhold Niebuhr's theological anthropology and Louis Janssens' love ethic.⁴³

A third way of viewing the conversation between practical philosophy and practical theology portrays their relation as indirect.⁴⁴ Practical theology *overhears* the discussion among contemporary utilitarians, Aristotelians, and Kantians, learning from it and finding it interesting, but it does not view it as the place to discover its own rational orientation. Several weeks ago, I unexpectedly received two free tickets to the second game of the World Series and was able to take my daughter, Sarah.⁴⁵ As we sat in the stands amid people who had waited in line for several days to buy tickets or had paid lots of money, we quickly realized we were among true-blue baseball fans. As the game progressed and the Yankees fell behind for the second game in a row, I could not help but overhear the conversation of two men sitting behind us who were criticizing the strategy of Joe Torre, the manager of the Yankees, inning-by-inning. I learned a lot as I listened to them talk but didn't feel compelled to turn around and join in. This was their passion, their team, their game.

I find this image of overhearing the conversation of others the most adequate way of conceptualizing the relationship between practical philosophy and practical theology. Dialogue with Habermas, MacIntyre, Hardin, or other moral philosophers is not, in the first instance, where we would expect

church-against-the-world ecclesiology. The argument might be made that MacIntyre is operating as a "crypto-Christian" in his philosophical ethics and that his interpretation of the Aristotelian tradition of practical reason in *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* is mediated through a commitment to Thomistic Christianity. Hauerwas, as such, could be viewed as reclaiming for the church a synthesis of classical and Christian practical reason long present in the Christian tradition. Even if this were the case, it would not undermine my point, for it is clear in MacIntyre that the neo-Aristotelian model of practical reason he advocates is not exclusive to the Christian community but is potentially usable by a variety of moral communities. Hauerwas, as such, is adopting a "generic" model of practical reason and filling it with Christian content.

⁴³ Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology*.

⁴⁴ This image is taken from Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits*, chap. 5.

⁴⁵ Special thanks to Joseph Gaston for making this "field work" possible.

to find our rational orientation in practical theology. Another way of putting this would be to say that we should resist incorporating practical philosophy at the level of a system: a fully developed model of practical reason, constructed on the basis of a family of interconnected arguments. What gets lost when that is done is the distinctiveness of practical theology as a form of theology and, more broadly, of theology as a particular field of argumentation and rhetoric.⁴⁶ The conversation with which practical theology begins, I believe, is one with dogmatic theology and Christian ethics.

In a sense, what I am asserting here is nothing more or less than what I have posited for any other field of rational inquiry. All argument fields are not the same. They are constituted by the epistemic values and rhetorical norms that establish the basis of rational communication. I want to go further, however, and support this claim on inner-theological grounds, for the communicative model of rationality I have developed is, in part, formed under the control of certain theological affirmations. The most important of these emerge from the recent discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity in dogmatic theology and Christian ethics.⁴⁷ Standing at the heart of this discussion is an understanding of the members of the Trinity as persons whose being is constituted by their dynamic relations of mutual love.⁴⁸ They do not merely *have* relations to one

⁴⁶ Simply to incorporate such a model along the lines of a Hauerwas or an Otto is to allow the argumentation and rhetoric of another field to set the terms for practical theology. To enter into conversation with practical philosophy as a full and equal partner, as does Browning, seems far more appealing on the surface. Indeed, at a later point, I will return to this approach as having a valid place in practical theology but not at the point where practical theology establishes the ethical and anthropological commitments that determine its rational orientation as an argument and rhetorical field.

⁴⁷ The Ur-source of this discussion, of course, is Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1.1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975). Beyond Barth, important contributions have been made by Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. J. Donceel (London: Burns & Oates, 1970); Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being Is in Becoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); idem, *God as the Mystery of the World*, trans. D. Guder (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1983); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, trans. M. Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988); Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993); and Thomas Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995). Renewed interest in this doctrine has been fueled by a broad range of sources: new scholarship on the Cappadocians that lifts up their social doctrine of the Trinity, a fresh look at the Council of Nicea and the way it orders the economic and immanent Trinity, feminist theology's reflection on appropriate language to describe the persons of the Trinity, and developments in the natural and social sciences that focus on dynamic relationality as the most adequate model to understand the world.

⁴⁸ The most powerful descriptions of this differentiated unity have drawn on the ancient concept of *perichoresis*. The three divine persons mutually inhere in one another, draw life from one another, and are what they are only in their relations of love to one another.

another; they *are* their relations. The net effect has been to expand greatly the role of the Trinity in theology. No longer tucked away quietly in a corner of the doctrine of God, it is viewed as the hermeneutical key to theological reflection and a model of personal, ecclesial, and social relations.⁴⁹ The communicative model of rationality I have been developing is, in part, a working out of the implications of the relational, social anthropology that this entails.

This discussion, also, provides us with a description of the nature and purpose of the church within the economy of God's salvation. It allows us to project the ethical ideal and rhetorical norms of theology as an argument field. Clearly, developing this rationale in a comprehensive fashion is not possible within the time I have this afternoon. I can, however, point to one trajectory of the trinitarian discussion that is particularly important to the development of such a rationale for practical theology: a description of God's relation to the world and the church in terms of the concept *missio Dei*.⁵⁰ This concept is closely related to the dynamic, relational model of the Trinity pointed to above.

The mission of God toward us in the sending of the Son reflects God's nature, will, and action—what I will be calling here God's praxis. God is a “sending God,” a God whose love for us in Jesus Christ reflects the dynamic movement and mutual love characterizing God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Accordingly, whenever we think of the being of God, we must think of it as dynamic and active being. We must also think of it as differentiated being, as the praxis of the one God who is present in this mission as three persons—each with a particular work to carry out but nonetheless united in a communion of love. Further still, we must think of this praxis as universal in scope and particular in form, as reaching out in love to every corner of creation but manifesting itself definitively in the sending of the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁹ Theological perspectives as different as those of Barth, Wilson-Kastner, and Boff have been drawn on in this discussion of the Trinity to project a vision of the authentic human community structured according to the pattern of the divine community. For a discussion of the way Barth's trinitarian theology informs his anthropology, providing guidance for the practice of pastoral care, see Daniel John Price, “Karl Barth's Anthropology in Light of Modern Thought: The Dynamic Concept of the Person in Trinitarian Theology and Object Relations Psychology,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1990.

⁵⁰ First used in the missionary conference in Willingen in 1952 to underscore the point that the mission of the church is not a human work but the work of the triune God, the *missio Dei* was picked up by a number of theologians and developed into a full-scale explication of the doctrine of God. See John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), chap. 4. My discussion of this topic has been influenced by personal conversations and correspondence with Andrew Purves, in addition to lectures he delivered at Montreat Retreat Center last summer.

The *missio Dei*, the mission of God as active, differentiated being, whose very nature is love, provides the hermeneutical key to our construal of God's praxis in the world and the nature and purpose of the church. It points to the following order: first the praxis of God, then God's praxis in the world and on behalf of the world, and finally, God's praxis in the church—God-world-church. The purpose of the church within the economy of salvation is thus to point to God's creating, reconciling, and redeeming praxis. It does so by giving witness to this praxis in word and deed, through its confession and its obedient actions, a witness it can render only as it participates in God's activity through the power of the Holy Spirit. *The precariousness of the church's witness in word and deed, the fact that its foundation exists outside itself in the missio Dei, is the reason that the rational communication of theology has emerged in this community.* In theology, the church reflects as a community on how well its confession and action correspond to God's praxis.

In confession, the church says what it believes; in obedient action, the church seeks to place its life in the service and witness of God. Across the centuries, the church has developed different forms of theology to reflect on each of these aspects of the church's life. In the remainder of this lecture, I will be focusing solely on the conversation between practical theology, dogmatic theology, and Christian ethics, leaving to one side practical theology's relationship to biblical studies and church history. Moreover, I will make only passing references to the social sciences, relying on my description of practical theology's conversation with practical philosophy to represent its relationship to these disciplines as well.

The terms "dogmatic theology," "Christian ethics," and "practical theology" are relatively recent, but something like each of them has existed in rudimentary form from the beginning of the church's life. While it has not always called its activity *dogmatic theology*, from the beginning the church has reflected on its confession in an attempt to do three things: (1) to set forth the full range of beliefs appropriate to the church's confession; (2) to develop these beliefs into full-blown doctrines that explicate the meaning of the more open-ended language used in first-order confession; and (3) to describe the interrelation of these doctrines. The genres and modes of argumentation by which these three tasks have been carried out have varied across the centuries.⁵¹ The early teaching manuals developed in conjunction with the

⁵¹ A helpful discussion, for example, of the contrast between the genres of the theology written in the medieval monasteries and that of the universities is found in Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. C. Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961), chap. 8. Discussion of the development of various genres of theology throughout the Middle Ages is found in David Knowles, *The*

catechetical preaching of the adult catechumenate are not quite the same genre as the catechisms of the sixteenth century. Likewise, Augustine's *City of God*, Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, and Barth's *Church Dogmatics* represent somewhat different genres and employ different styles of argumentation. Yet each is attempting to describe what the church should confess and is attending to the inner fit and coherence of the doctrines at stake in this confession.

Christian ethics, likewise, has not always been the term used to designate the rational communication by which the church formulates reasons for its actions in all spheres of life. As early as Paul's letters, however, we see this sort of reflection beginning to emerge, something continued in the Didache of the second century, the manuals, books, and homilies on the vices and virtues appearing throughout the Middle Ages, the penitential literature by which priests determined the severity of moral guilt in conjunction with confession, the literature of moral casuistry emerging during the tenth century, and finding ample Protestant expression in the cases of conscience writings of the English Puritans, the specific treatises on moral theology and, later, Christian ethics, first appearing after the Reformation.⁵² Here too, different genres and modes of argumentation can be seen. In somewhat different ways, however, they all have attended to two basic tasks that lie at the heart of Christian ethics: (1) an account of the general convictions that establish a framework for ethical reflection, including its standard, rationale, and, when appropriate, first principles; and (2) a description and exemplification of the ways this framework develops moral guidelines that can address specific situations and topics. Whether these two tasks are cast as a distinction between metaethics and applied ethics, moral theology and moral casuistry, or general ethics and special ethics, they have been present in rudimentary form from the outset of Christianity.

Practical theology is the most recent of these forms of theology, emerging as a discipline in conjunction with the modern research university, as pointed out in my opening remarks. It, too, however, has existed in rudimentary form from the beginning of the church's life, taking shape in somewhat different genres and employing different modes of argumentation at different points in

Evolution of Medieval Thought (New York: Vintage, 1961); and James Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought and Works* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1974).

⁵² Helpful overviews of this literature and Protestant and Roman Catholic differences can be found in Albert Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), parts 1-3; James Gustafson, *Protestant and Roman Catholic Ethics: Prospects for Rapprochement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). I am also grateful to Max Stackhouse for a helpful discussion of this literature.

history. What we might call "protopractical theology" can be discerned in the preaching manuals written in dialogue with classical rhetoric, found as early as book 4 of Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* and continuing in the manuals written by Rabanus Maurus, Guilbert de Nogent, Alain de Lille, Boneventura, and Henry of Hesse during the Middle Ages,⁵³ in the encyclopedic tradition of education found in the writings of Cassiodorus, Isidore, Hugh of St. Victor, and others,⁵⁴ in the tracts and treatises on the spiritual life written by Basil and Gregory of Nyssa and continuing in the writings of persons as different as Teresa of Avila and John Bunyon,⁵⁵ in the vast literature on the cure of souls,⁵⁶ and in the various manuals written to help bishops and pastors administer the church.

When we look at this literature as a whole, we discover a set of interests and a general orientation that set it apart from dogmatic theology and Christian ethics. Three elements, in particular, stand out: (1) a performative orientation, based on this literature's interest in how best to perform a particular

⁵³ See part 3 of Rabanus Maurus' manual for pastors, *De Institutione Clericorum*; the text of this appears in *Rabani Manri de institutione clericorum, libri tres*, ed. A. Knoepfler, Veröffentlichungen aus dem Kirchenhistorischen Seminar München, no. 5 (Munich, 1901). Guilbert de Nogent, *A Book about the Way a Sermon Ought to Be Given*, trans. J. Miller, in *Readings in Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. J. Miller, M. Prosser, and T. Benson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973). Alain de Lille, *De Arte Praedicatoria*; for a partial translation, see "The Four Senses of Scriptural Interpretation and the Mediaeval Theory of Preaching," *Speculum* 4 (1929): 282-90. Bonaventura's *Ars Concionandi* is translated in Jarry Hazel, *A Translation, with Commentary, of the Bonaventuran "Ars Concionandi"*, doctoral dissertation, Washington State University, 1972. Henry of Hesse's *A Short and Very Useful Tract on the Art of Preaching* is translated by Harry Caplan in "Henry of Hesse' On the Art of Preaching," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 48 (1933). A comprehensive list of preaching manuals has been compiled by Harry Caplan in *Mediaeval "Artes praedicandi": A Handlist* (Cornell, 1934); and *Mediaeval "Artes praedicandi": A Supplementary Handlist* (Cornell, 1936). For a discussion of this literature, see the following: James Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974); George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Charles Smyth, *The Art of Preaching: A Practical Survey of Preaching in the Church of England 747-1939* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1940); and G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c. 1350-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926).

⁵⁴ Cassiodorus, *An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings*, trans. L. Jones (New York: Columbia University Records of Civilization, 1946), vol. 40; Isidore, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. W. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911); *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor*, trans. J. Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961). A discussion of this literature is found in Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, chap. 2.

⁵⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *De instituto Christiano* and *De perfecta forma Christiani*, in *Opera*, ed. W. Jaegger (Leiden, 1952), vol. 8, part 1; Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, trans. A. Peers (New York: Doubleday, 1991); John Bunyon, *I Will Pray with the Spirit*, ed. R. Greaves (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976).

⁵⁶ A helpful overview of this literature is found in William Clebsch and Charles Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1964); and John McNeil, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951).

practice or activity in a concrete set of circumstances; (2) a theory of formation and transformation guiding the praxis of the Christian life over time; and (3) a practical theological hermeneutic of the field in which an action or practice takes place, locating the actors involved in moral time and space. Across the centuries, the literature in which these elements have been addressed has developed genres that tend to focus on one or another of these elements. Preaching manuals, for example, tend to focus on the performative dimension. Ascetical writing, often, has focused more directly on the hermeneutical task of describing the Spirit's activity.

Taken together, however, these elements constitute the distinctive rational orientation of practical theology, what I will call here the rationality of discernment.⁵⁷ *This is a form of rationality that attempts to provide reasons for how and why to perform an action or practice in a manner that corresponds to and participates in the praxis of God.* As I describe each of these dimensions, I will hark back to my earlier discussion of the Trinity, for there I began the sort of conversation with dogmatic theology and Christian ethics that I believe is the starting point of practical theology. I will also hark back to my earlier discussion of practical philosophy, integrating insights of each of the three models of practical reason explored at that time into the model of discernment being developed here.

In many ways, the rationality of discernment is found in its most distinctive form in the first dimension pointed to above: practical theology's orientation toward the performance of some action or practice in the midst of a concrete set of circumstances. Accordingly, it will receive the most extensive treatment. In a manner that differentiates it from Christian ethics, there is an explicit "how to" orientation in practical theology, as well as a "why to." It is concerned with providing rational guidance in the performance of certain actions, such as preaching a sermon, offering care to a person in grief, parenting one's children, or giving witness to one's friends. Guidance in "how to," however, is also balanced with attention to "why to," an understanding of the ends being pursued.

This rests on an awareness that such actions are always performed in contexts saturated with contingency and, ultimately, must rely on the actors' understanding of what is at stake in an act of care or preaching or parenting, not just how to use certain practical techniques. What do you say in a pastoral conversation with a young mother who is dying of breast cancer? What

⁵⁷ These three dimensions are roughly comparable to the distinction between general and special ethics, with the latter two dealing with the larger questions of purpose and context and the first with questions of performance in particular situations.

teaching goals and methods are best to adopt when teaching the Book of Jeremiah to a group of white, upper-middle-class suburbanites? How do you offer care to the youth group when its president has just committed suicide? Giving answer to these questions is not a matter of applying the same old techniques again and again. It involves a sensitive reading of the situation at hand, consideration of the persons involved, the resources available, the different ways you might proceed, and most important of all, the purpose of the activity being undertaken. "Why to" sets the terms of "how to" in framing a response.

Indeed, practical theology goes even further than an assessment of situational contingencies. It invites the participants to frame their actions in terms of their discernment of the activity of the triune God. If this is to involve more than intuition, then the actors must seek to offer reasons for their actions on the basis of a practical theological hermeneutic by which God's praxis is described. More will be said of this later.

What rhetorical norms are most appropriate to the performative aspect of practical theology? Across the centuries, a number of different rhetorics have appeared in the precursors of practical theology, the rhetorics of canon law, public policy, moral casuistry, and technological application. In my view, none of these is as adequate as the rhetoric of art. The rational guidance practical theology offers in how and why to preach, teach, parent, offer care, or perform any other action in a particular situation is best construed as rules of art.

Rules of art are guidelines that are inherently open ended, pointing to a range of ways of proceeding. When preaching a funeral sermon, here are three different forms you might use in presenting your subject. If you choose this one, then consider proceeding along these lines. If you choose that one, then a different set of options appears. The assumption is that the actor is engaged in a creative activity that cannot adequately be performed by following rules mechanically. Rules of art seek to support a reflective process by which the actor discerns a "fitting response."⁵⁸ Means and ends must "fit"

⁵⁸The kind of rationality this involves is somewhat parallel to that found in moral casuistry, which reasons from general principles or paradigmatic cases to particular situations and cases. The way I am developing it here, however, the closest analogues are found in the responsibilist ethics of H. Richard Niebuhr and certain modified divine command theories building on the work of Karl Barth. In both cases, the immediate activity of the living, triune God serves as the framework in which an ethical response in any particular situation is placed. For a discussion of the moral reasoning of casuistry, see Jonsen and Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry*; Kenneth Kirk, *Conscience and Its Problems: An Introduction to Casuistry* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1927); and Nigel Biggar, "A Case for Casuistry in the Church," *Modern Theology* 6 (October 1989): 29-51. Responsibilist and divine command perspectives are discussed in H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*

the occasion, the participants, and the purpose of the act as these are construed within the framework of the present activity of God.⁵⁹ Accordingly, appropriate use of rules of art is evaluated on aesthetic, dramaturgical grounds, not juridical or instrumental grounds. They are evaluated kairologically, rather than consequentially or functionally.

Here, we are brought face-to-face with the reason that practical theology cannot take over in a straightforward fashion the model of practical reason found in utilitarianism. Like utilitarianism, practical theology is contextual, reflects on means and ends, and has a role for the evaluation of consequences. Yet, all of these are placed in a radically different framework: the rational orientation of discernment. Think of the way a kaleidoscope works. You look down the tube to see a beautiful pattern composed of pieces of colored glass. Turn the end of the tube and the pattern shifts. The same pieces of glass are present, but now they are reordered in a new gestalt. So too, the contextuality and consequentialism of utilitarianism are placed in a radically different framework in practical theology. The context becomes covenantal, not contractual. Consequences are evaluated in terms of their correspondence to the praxis of God, not their contribution to the preferred goods of the parties involved.

To this point, we have examined only one dimension of practical theology: its orientation toward the guidance of performance in particular situations. The second and third dimensions flow from this and can be treated more briefly. The second dimension of practical theology was described as the construction of a theory of formation and transformation that can guide the praxis of the Christian life over time. In terms of the aesthetic orientation of discernment as it has just been described, these kinds of theories play an important role. They articulate a sense of the whole in relation to which particular judgments in given situations are made. They make it possible to view a discrete act of teaching, preaching, or care in a particular situation as an episode in an unfolding series of episodes that, taken together, contribute to the formation of individuals and communities over time. Here, the insights of

(New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Biggar, *The Hastening That Waits*; Robert Merrihew Adams, "A Modified Divine Command Theory of Ethical Wrongness," and "Divine Command Metaethics as Necessary a Posteriori," in *Divine Commands and Morality*, ed. P. Helm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁵⁹ Broadly speaking, these criteria reflect Kenneth Burke's pentad: (1) Act: What took place? (2) Scene: What is the context in which it occurred? (3) Agent: Who performed the act? (4) Agency: How was it done? (5) Purpose: Why was it done? (*A Grammar of Motives* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969], chap. 1). See Joseph R. Gusfield's discussion in the introduction to *Kenneth Burke: On Symbols and Society*, ed. J. R. Gusfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 14-16.

neo-Aristotelian practical philosophy are particularly helpful. What is at stake in the decisions and actions we undertake in any given context is not merely the immediate consequences but the sorts of persons and community we are becoming. Our personal character and our communal identity are at stake.

In recent years, a number of Christian ethicists have adopted a neo-Aristotelian approach to describe the way formation takes place in the Christian community. While generally sympathetic to this approach, I find it inadequate in two ways as a model of practical theological rationality, especially as developed in the work of Stanley Hauerwas. In his appropriation of Aristotle's ethics of character, Hauerwas fails to incorporate adequately Aristotle's politics, reducing it to the "polis" of the church and, consequently, failing to construe public life as a sphere of divine action and Christian formation.⁶⁰ This is inadequate from the perspective of the *missio Dei* described earlier. Second, and equally important, the rhetoric of virtue and practice as wielded by Hauerwas is so preoccupied with the formative power of the Christian community and continuity of the moral self that they become more than preparation for the ever risky task of hearing anew the word of the living God.⁶¹ They become an end in themselves. Or to use somewhat different terms, the most important virtues in the Christian life are not merely formational; they are relational, having to do with the dispositions and excellences that prepare persons to hear the word of the living God through the power of the Holy Spirit. I am not ruling out a place for communal formation here, only placing it in the context of an open relationship with the relational God. In Christian ethics and in practical theology, therefore, the neo-Aristotelian model of practical reason must be reconstructed as it is incorporated into a model of discernment. The image of the kaleidoscope applies here too.

This has important implications for the way practical theology views theories of formation and transformation, including those it appropriates from the social sciences. Accounts of human agency and causation are viewed in a dialectical fashion.⁶² At one moment, they are offered as comprehensive

⁶⁰ This insight was provided by Peter Paris in personal conversation.

⁶¹ There really are two closely related problems here. On a strictly human level, Hauerwas overemphasizes processes of formation to the exclusion of transformation. That is to say, elements of discontinuity and crisis have an extremely important role to play in the shaping of the character of self and community. Hauerwas does not offer an adequate account of the role of transformation in the establishment of character. The second problem has to do with the relationship between natural agency and causation and divine agency and causation. See Biggars' discussion of this problem in *The Hastening That Waits*, chap. 4.

⁶² This rules out a parceling out of the contribution of the human and divine. Human agency takes us to a certain point and, then, when it reaches its limits, the divine takes over.

theoretical explanations that can guide the practices of preaching, teaching, care, and other aspects of Christian existence in relation to a larger, temporal whole. Rational guidance like the following is offered: In light of this developmental theory and educational research and that understanding of Christian civic virtue, here are the sorts of things that need to be done during adolescence and young adulthood in order to form a Christian identity that takes its responsibility to the public sphere seriously. At the next moment, these same theories are qualified, decentered, and even denied as adequate explanations of the mystery of the triune God's saving presence in the world. This is why it is important for practical theology, when working with the social sciences, always to operate with several perspectives simultaneously and to appropriate them in an intentionally eclectic fashion. Structural developmental theory, for example, is placed alongside cognitive psychology; both are placed in tension with object relations theory. The use of a range of theoretical perspectives not only opens up various angles of vision but, even more important, makes it clear that none is adequate to the task of describing the mystery of God's praxis in the world.

The final dimension of practical theology is its development of a practical theological hermeneutic of the field in which an action or practice takes place, locating the actors involved in moral time and space. In much contemporary practical theology, this is viewed almost exclusively as a matter of contextual analysis by way of the social sciences. What I have in mind here includes but goes beyond this sort of contextual analysis. It views the most important context relevant to the activity of discernment as the praxis of God. This means that practical theology must provide an account of the patterns of God's activity in the world in terms of which interpretation of particular contexts can be made. Different hermeneutics will bring different things into focus. One grounded in liberation themes, for example, will bring a certain set of issues to the fore. Another, governed by Christ's atoning death, will foreground a different set of issues. In both cases, the framework developed locates persons and events in moral time and space.⁶³

The novelist Walker Percy once wrote a tongue-in-cheek book entitled *Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book*.⁶⁴ Using an aphoristic style, he raises a series of loosely related questions designed to make you, the reader, think. At no point does he offer the kind of practical advice you would expect from a

By "dialectical" is meant an equal and simultaneous acknowledgment of the validity of two perspectives that cannot be reduced to a higher, synthetic perspective.

⁶³ The idea of a moral field is taken from John Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chap. 3.

⁶⁴ (New York: Washington Square, 1983).

self-help manual. As you make your way through the book, however, you suddenly discover that Percy is leading you by indirection *into* a cosmos and out of your lostness.

This is the task of practical theology in its construction of a practical theological hermeneutic. It is several steps removed from the development of rules of art. It locates the discrete performances to which these rules point in a larger cosmos of moral time and space. But it does not take us there directly. It takes our time and space, the time of sermons and teaching, the space of public policy and care, and places them in the context of God's time and space. It first helps us recognize we are lost in the cosmos we have created for ourselves before relocating us in the cosmos God would have us inhabit.

How does practical theology proceed in carrying out this task? It employs two closely related forms of rationality. One proceeds by way of critical thinking; the other by way of utopian thinking. One is based on an acknowledgment of the reality of sin and the fall from right-relatedness with God and neighbor into the deep divisions of idol worship. The other proceeds on the basis of hope born of God's conquest of sin in Christ and the promise of sin's complete eradication at the end of time. Both are universal in scope.

Surely, at last, practical theology finds a fitting model of how to carry out its critical and utopian tasks in the practical reason of Habermas, who projects a utopian picture of the ideal discourse community, which affords a critical perspective on real life situations and broader social processes. Utopian and critical, practical reason awakens the imagination to unforeseen possibilities that can be worked toward and planned for. Even here, however, practical theology must say "Yes" and "No." It must say "Yes" to the intent of this model, universal in scope and liberating in effect. But it must say "No" to the socioevolutionary schemes and overly optimistic evaluation of Enlightenment ideals by which Habermas justifies his ethical ideal.⁶⁵ Practical theology can and must say more in its theological interpretation.

Jürgen Moltmann once wrote: "Unless hope has been roused and is alive there can be no stimulation for planning . . . but without planning, there can

⁶⁵ Habermas grounds his discourse ethic in a family of arguments. One line of reasoning views a commitment to universalism as something that can be reconstructed by an analysis of the "intuitive know-how" of competent communicators operating at a postconventional stage of moral development. A second draws on Kohlberg's theory of moral development as empirical evidence of his understanding of postconventional morality and as a model by which to understand the evolution of society. A third line of justification is a "historically self-conscious" commitment to the universalism implicit in modern democratic, secular culture.

be no realistic hope.”⁶⁶ Practical theology lives between hope and planning. It hopes because it knows that the future of creation resides in God’s future, the future of the new creation, a future that has entered created time and space already in Jesus Christ and continues to break into our time and space in the work of the Holy Spirit. Animated by this hope, waiting confidently for its fulfillment, practical theology works and plans, seeking to discern that which is historically possible, opening up our time and space to the praxis of the triune God.

⁶⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *Hope and Planning*, trans. M. Clarkson (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 178.

BOOK REVIEWS

Updike, John. *In the Beauty of the Lilies*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996. Pp. 491. \$25.95.

A novel that begins with a Presbyterian minister's crisis of faith and ends with his great-grandson's heroic liberation of captive religious-cult members might seem a promising prospect for readers interested in faith and family systems in America. Readers with some connection to Princeton Seminary might also be expected to take a certain pleasure in their point of contact with the aforementioned minister, who arrived on "the firm and reassuring ground of Gothic, semi-bucolic Princeton" in 1888 to study with Benjamin Warfield and live in Alexander Hall. Updike's quaint description of the Seminary might evoke an ironic smile from its present cohort: In those idyllic years, we are told, our protagonist's "eminent instructors radiated an undisturbed piety and his fellow students, though festively disputatious, appeared uniformly stout in their vocations, vigorously proof against disabling spiritual wounds." The jacket blurb and opening pages seem to promise a vivid wide-angle view of faith, failure, and dubious redemption. Unfortunately, the whole of this novel is less than the sum of its parts.

Meticulously researched (Updike's research assistants must have spent hours gleaning period details and local color from microfiche newspaper copy in libraries at Patterson, Princeton, and other sites of action) and laboriously elaborated, the story sinks under the weight of unpruned information and indiscriminate descriptive detail. Though the portrait of the Reverend Clarence Wilmot, who suddenly one day "felt the last particles of his faith leave him" with a sensation of "visceral surrender, a set of dark sparkling bubbles escaping upward," may at first appeal to the sympathies of those who have struggled with doubt, it finally fails to compel interest as he dwindles through his second career as an encyclopedia salesman toward an early death. His legacy of vague and vestigial Presbyterianism diminishes in his children and grandchildren to sentimental holiday piety, uncomfortable religious apathy, and compensatory political zealotry. Clarence's son, granddaughter, and great-grandson successively replace him as protagonists as the story wends its laborious way through several decades of American social history, its wandering spotlight returning to the particulars of the central characters' lives only often enough to remind us we are supposed to be interested in their fate. Even then, we are allowed little access to their interior lives but seem to watch them

as figures on a screen playing out their assigned fates like second-rate soap opera stars.

The fourth and final section of the novel scales melodramatic heights as it recounts incidents in the sordid lives of sociopathic millennialist-cult members in the Rocky Mountains who collect guns, threaten local schoolchildren, and work on being fruitful and multiplying while they wait for the second coming. Yet it fails even then to awaken the empathetic imagination to real curiosity about how one might be driven to such extremes.

Though the story is rich with possibilities, few of them are realized. It is sure to disappoint readers who come to it hoping for insight into the dark night of the Protestant soul, the sources of religious extremism, or the role of the media in eviscerating American piety. One may derive some satisfaction from the sheer bulk of historical information it provides but will hardly be moved to realize the magnitude of what is lost when living faith atrophies to half-remembered gestures of piety. Nor is one likely to be awakened to real horror at the monstrosity of militant extremist cults like the one half-comically featured in the final chapters. The teller of this squalid tale seems to suffer from the same metastasized cynicism as his characters.

Books that call us to face what is dark, apocalyptic, and troubling about twentieth-century culture can be both useful and enlightening; *In the Beauty of the Lilies* falls short on both counts. To paraphrase Gertrude Stein's admonishment to the young Hemingway that "remarks are not literature," I would say of Updike's latest novel that information is not history and sterile chronicles of confused lives are not characterization, which at its best ought to evoke recognition, empathy, and compassion. The book may satisfy a certain antiquarian interest in the popular culture of recent decades, but it does not speak to the heart.

Marilyn Chandler McEntyre
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Lee, Sang Hyun, Wayne Proudfoot, and Albert Blackwell, eds. *Faithful Imagining: Essays in Honor of Richard R. Niebuhr*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995. Pp. xxi + 207. \$54.95.

For over thirty years Richard R. Niebuhr has taught at Harvard Divinity School—not only theology per se but also multidisciplinary perspectives on symbols, visual experience, and a great variety of texts at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Although his publications along this wide spectrum have lasting value, he has concentrated on teaching, bringing numerous types

of experience and texts to his deeply reflective colloquies with students. By reputation, which Albert Blackwell beautifully captures in his introductory essay and which I have repeatedly heard from his students, Niebuhr is a quietly stirring teacher, offering a focused probing of much-traveled territories and opening new ones. The same is true of his writings.

As Niebuhr said in a 1980 chapel talk: "We cannot pierce through our old habits to the real world except as we imagine this world as faithfully, as critically, and as responsibly as lies in our power." Inside and outside theology, this remarkably unself-assuming man has eschewed merely speculative, system-building discourse in favor of looking attentively into the experiential meanings of words and events where God meets us. This habit has inspired a similar devotion in his students and other colleagues. The results are a continuing journey, never a recrudescence.

This spirit permeates the eleven contributions to this Festschrift. Niebuhr himself has combined an immersion in "nature" with a centering on the life and work of Christ, drawing impulse toward this openness especially from Calvin, Edwards, and Schleiermacher. We also hear in this volume echoes of his loving use of other favored sources, biblical and extrabiblical: Mark but also Augustine, Buber, Cassirer, Coleridge, Eliade, Emerson, William James, Kant, Kierkegaard, Otto, Peirce, Rauschenbusch, and Unamuno, along with a great many literary and visual artists.

In the initial section, "Nature: Human and Whole," Margaret Miles examines the themes of "nature and responsibility" in Augustine's debate with the Manicheans, and Sang Hyun Lee summarizes Jonathan Edwards on "nature." In the conclusion to his essay on nature as a token of God's sovereignty and grace in the Qur'an, William Graham states: "The building blocks of 'faithful imagining' are experiences in the sensual world." Then, in a very important piece on "Tracing the Order of Nature: Niebuhr and the Secular Mind," James Gustafson highlights Niebuhr's own writings as they bear on "the religious significance of nature." These emphasize "the state of being affected totally" and a faithfulness that goes beyond religiousness. Among other things, he regards these works as highly significant stimuli toward helping secular folk discover and open up to the religious factor in their lives.

In the central part, on "Self: Body and Spirit," historian Caroline Bynum carries forth the main theme by viewing soul and body in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Paula Covey performs a feminist case study on artist Frida Kahlo, Carol Zeleski explores what it means to pay attention religiously, and Wayne Proudfoot examines Charles Peirce's thought on "natural belief in religion."

In the final part, "Community: University and Church," George Rupp, President of Columbia University, critically reflects on "political correctness," and David Willis-Watkins discusses loyalty to Jesus Christ via nurture and correction by his community, bringing in aesthetic themes.

The remarkable overall thematic consistency of this celebratory volume is what most recommends it, for all its diversity of approach—a fitting testimony to Niebuhr's strong influence on a great many scholars. Oddly, Schleiermacher is not much mentioned here, though Niebuhr's writings and seminars have helped create the now long-standing renaissance of Schleiermacher studies. The answer is to go directly to his 1964 book and eight essays on Schleiermacher. In progress are works on theology as symbolic criticism of religious symbols and on the moral character of perception, notably of photographic representation, which derives from Niebuhr's own long experience as a photographer. Meanwhile, scholars and preachers are heartily recommended to get a head start with this collection of faithfully imagining essays.

Terrence N. Tice
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Chiba, Shin, George R. Hunsberger, and Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, eds. *Christian Ethics in Ecumenical Context: Theology, Culture, and Politics in Dialogue*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995. Pp. xii + 385. \$30.00.

This handsome Festschrift for Charles C. West is a most appropriate tribute to a remarkable man. The title and subtitle are filled with phrases that typify Charlie, as most of the authors call him: Christian ethics, ecumenical context, theology, culture, politics, dialogue. Charlie himself has lived for extended periods in the United States, China, Germany, and Switzerland. To that list we can almost add Czechoslovakia, where Prague was the center of the Christian Peace Conference, in which he was active for several years. As I write this, he is concluding several months in India. The book is equally international. Two of the three editors now live in Japan. Of the twenty-one chapters, about half are from India, Switzerland, Pakistan, Japan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Phillipines. If we include authors writing out of extensive experience outside North America, the total becomes a majority.

The variety is immense. Five chapters, including the fascinating interview of her husband by Ruth West, appeared earlier in *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, in vol. 12 (July 1991), a special issue honoring Charlie on his retirement after thirty years on the Princeton Theological Seminary faculty.

But most chapters are new, and the editors' introduction brings some unity into the diverse book. Some authors write with direct reference to Charles West; some honor him by developing positions to counter his; some choose themes of their own, always within the wide context set by that intriguing title and subtitle. It just might be that only a conscientious reviewer will read the book cover-to-cover, but every chapter will be somebody's favorite. The writers include such influential ecumenical leaders as M.M. Thomas, J.M. Lochman, and Paul Abrecht. They also include younger writers on their way to fame.

The book reminds us of the tumultuous history through which Charlie's generation (which is also mine) lived. He knew a world polarized by the Nazi threat, then polarized again by the Cold War. The ending of those eras removed the fixed points that, for better and worse, guided much thought and action, theological, cultural, political, and economic. The liberation from those contexts brought new opportunities and new confusions.

The recent fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and the approaching fiftieth anniversary of the World Council of Churches show both the staying power and the troubles of both organizations. The UN began among the victors of World War II, with some significant gestures toward a more comprehensive association. At present the Security Council is dominated by an obsolescent selection of the "great powers," and the General Assembly by the majority of the less powerful (militarily and economically); everybody knows the weaknesses of the UN, and nobody has the wisdom or will to correct them. The WCC began with the leadership of the Protestant churches of the North Atlantic countries. Now it includes the Orthodox and maintains on-again, off-again relations with the Roman Catholic Church; and founders are a minority. It is struggling with its various ideological captivities. All these confusions creep into this book. We might wish for greater clarity, but such clarity would, at this moment, be fraudulent.

Charles West is old enough to treasure a past and young enough to enter into the struggles of our own time. He was a student of both Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr. In his maturity he cherishes "the wonder and the joy of Barth" and hails Bonhoeffer as his "favorite" theologian. He treasures personal memories of Visser 't Hooft, J.H. Oldham, Lesslie Newbigin, D.T. Niles, David Paton, and Josef Hromadka. These names remind us of a grand heritage. But Charlie has kept moving. He never wavered in his strong belief in the centrality of Christ. But that belief has driven him into dialogue with theologians of different persuasions, with Marxists, and with many others. He has always been ready to testify, to listen, and to learn. Some of the writers

here are coping with the postmodernist world, as he coped earlier with Marxism and secularism. This is a book to honor a senior scholar and leader, a book to widen everybody's horizons.

It would be unjust to try to define a single theme for the book. But a phrase that echoes throughout is the classical Reformed motto *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*. That phrase also suits Charlie well.

Roger L. Shinn
Union Theological Seminary

Blount, Brian K. *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. Pp. x + 222. \$18.00.

"It is now commonplace to hear biblical scholars admit that textual inquiry is influenced by the contextual presuppositions of the researcher. What is not so evident is the process by which this influence takes place, recognition of its dramatically powerful influence, and acceptance of its implications. This book is intended to further the discussion on each of these accounts" (p. vii). To fulfill this purpose, Blount draws from the sociolinguistic theory of M. A. K. Halliday with the correcting influence of sociologist Enrique Dussel.

Halliday states that communication involves three factors: textual, ideational, and interpersonal. The textual concerns grammar and vocabulary; the ideational, the concepts behind the textual level; the interpersonal, the sociocultural environment of the language user. Blount adapts Halliday's theory of oral communication to text interpretation. The textual and ideational levels are within the domain of the text, but the interpersonal level affects both authors and readers.

Blount demonstrates how the interpersonal affects interpretation in biblical scholarship, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, Negro spirituals, and black sermons. Although interpreters emphasize different aspects, in every interpretation all three factors—textual, ideational, and interpersonal—operate together in the production of meaning. Blount can therefore conclude that no text has one meaning; rather each text has a range of "meaning potential." Depending upon one's own sociolinguistic environment (the interpersonal), each interpreter unlocks certain segments of the text's meaning potential, while overlooking other segments. Therefore, no group has a monopoly on the true interpretation of a text.

Here Blount is primarily criticizing mainstream biblical scholarship, which has generally denied marginal voices. Those on the margins often do not have

the educational background to work out the intricacies of the textual and ideational levels to the satisfaction of scholars; their interpretations, therefore, have generally been dismissed as uninformed. Blount, however, demonstrates that even such "popular" interpretations can uncover meaning potential that may be overlooked by scholars.

In part 2, Blount discusses the meaning potential of the Markan trial scenes and demonstrates how different interpretations unlock certain segments of this meaning potential. Here we see his understanding of responsible text interpretation. Interpreters must pay close attention to all three features—the textual, ideational, and interpersonal. In order fully to consider these features, interpreters must have the necessary linguistic skills and become familiar with interpretive perspectives that differ from their own. For biblical scholars, this clearly means listening to interpretations of those who are not part of mainstream scholarship. These "popular" interpretations will bring new perspectives to scholars, thereby enabling them to see how their own background might be narrowing their view of the larger meaning potential of a text. Even after such work has been done, however, a complete interpretation has not been achieved. No complete interpretations exist. In fact, "the objective of a complete interpretation is not only an illusion, but undesirable because it locks out the ways in which perpetually new experiences can shed light on what and how the text *meant* and *means*" (p. 183).

This book reorients biblical criticism in a way that should prove beneficial to the church as it moves into the new millenium. Blount calls us to a more accountable hermeneutic in which those who have traditionally been excluded from defining biblical truth can gain a greater voice. This reorientation is much needed as the church increasingly becomes multicultural and global. At the same time, this reorientation does not abandon the strengths of higher criticism, for Blount acknowledges that in order fully to consider the textual and ideational aspects, certain linguistic skills are necessary. His model of interpretation appears to be increasingly within reach of contemporary seminarians, preachers, and others who have benefited from the recent scholarly interest in interpretations by women, third-world peoples, and African Americans. Unfortunately, it remains outside the reach of most Christians who understand little about higher criticism or other "marginal" voices. This model should serve as a goal in our preaching and teaching as we strive to bring the gospel to our students and parishioners.

Raymond F. Person, Jr.
Ohio Northern University

Charlesworth, James H. *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995. Pp. xxv + 481. \$30.00.

This comprehensive monograph on the Beloved Disciple in the Gospel of John comprises ten chapters, an introduction, selected bibliography, and indexes of modern authors, subjects, selected Greek terms, and scriptures and other ancient writings.

In the Gospel of John there are five references to "the disciple whom Jesus loved," John 13:23-26, 19:25-27, 20:2-10, 21:20-23, and 21:24. Scholars have throughout the centuries sought to identify him. Charlesworth provides an extensive survey of research. Names suggested are John the Apostle, Matthias, Apollos, Paul or a Paulinist, Benjamin, Judas Iscariot, Peter's brother Andrew, Nathanael, Lazarus, John Mark, Judas, Jesus' brother John the Elder, and even the Buddhist figure of Ananda. Some have identified the Beloved Disciple with persons such as the rich young ruler or one of the anonymous disciples of John 21:2. Other scholars think that the Beloved Disciple is not a person but a symbol of the church or of an apostolic prophet. Others think that, although he is a real human person, his identity is lost. Finally, some scholars conclude that it is impossible to decide what kind of figure he might have been.

Charlesworth concurs with the scholars who perceive that the Beloved Disciple is meant to be a real historical person and that some of the traditions may go back to a disciple of Jesus. He concludes, however, that none of the suggestions made by scholars is persuasive.

In his exegetical analysis, Charlesworth makes observations suggesting that a likely candidate for the Beloved Disciple is Thomas. Charlesworth argues that the most decisive insight is the narrator's indication that Thomas must have had knowledge possessed by the Beloved Disciple: Thomas demanded to see and to put his hands into the wound in Jesus' side, a wound the Beloved Disciple had seen, according to John 19:32-35. It is not stated that Thomas actually touched Jesus' body, however. The main point of the story is the continuity of the risen one with the crucified one and the fact that he is the bearer of *life*.

Both the Beloved Disciple and Thomas are among the disciples of Jesus, and both are portrayed as ideal students who illustrate the Evangelist's concept of knowing and believing. At the Last Supper the Beloved Disciple and Judas seem to be contrasted; Thomas and Judas are also contrasted. Judas is the betrayer, in contrast to Thomas who makes the paradigmatic confession of Jesus as Lord and God (20:28). Correspondingly, Judas is the betrayer,

while the Beloved Disciple supports Jesus even at the place of crucifixion, for which he serves as witness.

The supplementary chapter 21 reveals the anguish in the Johannine community over the death of the Beloved Disciple. They thought that the Beloved Disciple was to live until Jesus' parousia (21:20-23). But the Beloved Disciple died. His "rival disciple," Peter, had glorified God by his death as a martyr (21:18-19). Thus, the death of the Beloved Disciple did not fit the understanding of him as a model disciple and witness. The Johannine Christians had an answer to this charge if he was Thomas, who willingly faced martyrdom for Jesus (11:16) and who, as the Beloved Disciple, was beside Jesus when he died.

By means of detailed exegesis, Charlesworth suggests that one of the disciples of John the Baptist became Thomas the Beloved Disciple. Since the Beloved Disciple, according to John 21:24, witnessed to the things written in the Gospel, he was someone who witnessed Jesus' life and teachings, from the descent of the Spirit (chap. 1) until well past the resurrection appearances (chaps. 20-21). Through the literary device of moving from ambiguity, misunderstanding, and clarification, it is gradually shown that a disciple of John the Baptist was the Beloved Disciple, who finally is revealed to be none other than Thomas.

Charlesworth has written a major work on the enigmatic figure of the Beloved Disciple. His survey of research makes the book a basic reference work, and it is impressive that, despite all the many candidates suggested by scholars, Charlesworth has been able to advance a hypothesis that is innovative and is supported by several observations.

The book is written in an energetic, argumentative style. At times the presentation is somewhat repetitious, and, as is natural, some observations made or connections drawn are of more weight than others. The book is a major accomplishment, since it reopens the questions of the authorship of the Gospel and of the identity of the person referred to as the authoritative witness, the Beloved Disciple.

Peder Borgen
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Weems, Renita J. *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. Pp. xvi + 150. \$14.00.

"What better way," asks the author, "of personifying God's claim [upon Israel] than by using as an analogy a human relationship where issues of

power, propriety, property and purity were profoundly at stake?" In four chapters Weems explores the use and effectiveness of metaphors in prophetic speech with a focus on the marriage metaphor used by the prophets to illustrate the bond between God and ancient Israel. First, the author observes, this metaphor tapped into widely held male views of female sexuality as dangerous, disgusting, and threatening. Also, the marriage metaphor operated effectively to assert key elements about the relationship of God and ancient Israel: It was a relationship of unequals; it shared expectations and responsibility; the subordinate partner had the greater burden and was constrained not to offend the dominant partner; and God had the right and power to punish and redirect the relationship.

In chapter 2 Weems outlines more specifically the use of the marriage metaphor in Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, who each employ the imagery with their own slant. Ezekiel comes off easily as the worst offender with chapters 16 and 23 divulging "some of the most obscene and misogynistic impulses conceivable against women." Subsequently, the author argues that this metaphor shed light also on God's behavior toward Israel. God was seen as erratic and volatile in his dealings with Israel, much like an offended and shamed husband or lover can be seen to behave toward his female partner.

In a last chapter Weems reviews the way in which unintended audiences might receive the metaphor of God as husband/lover with the faith community in the female role. Once more, she presents the three prophetic angles on female infidelity and the male reaction to it. She suggests that women who read the metaphor uncritically may find themselves "casually accepting the ways in which they are demonized and victimized." Only as we rethink the language can we reconstruct it and reinvest it with "values and visions that will ennoble human life today." One direction of this reconstruction may be to gain insight into the wounding that patriarchy has caused, both in terms of the faith community and of God.

With this work Renita Weems has once more made a valuable contribution to the enterprise of deconstructing and reconstructing the biblical text from an African American perspective. Yet the reader may be left with some questions: If the marriage/lover metaphor is found for the most part in the prophets Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, then what could be the significance of this limitation? Why are just these prophets drawing on the same field of metaphorical meaning? In view of the limited scope of the metaphor, is it correct to assign this type of rhetorical device to all the prophets, as the author does throughout her work by referring to "the prophets"? Also, is it true that female sexuality was viewed in ancient Israel as dangerous, disgusting, and

threatening, as the author would have it? Finally, it seems to this reviewer that the context of war and its concomitant destruction, including rape, must be taken into account when exploring rhetorical language that refers to rape and mutilation in these texts. This context of war was certainly a real one for Jeremiah and Ezekiel, whose prophecies should be viewed in light of the destruction of Jerusalem during the Babylonian conquest. The familiarity of both the intended and the unintended audience with rape as a powerful militaristic tool is a significant issue in a discussion of this metaphor.

Johanna W. H. van Wijk-Bos
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Barrett, C. K. *Paul: An Introduction to His Thought*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994. Pp. xii + 180. \$12.99.

In 1962, at the end of his teaching career and after writing over a dozen thick, weighty volumes of the *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth gave a set of lectures in the United States that became the book *Evangelical Theology*. They were at once profound and simple, the kind of simplicity that comes after living with and loving theological questions for a lifetime. What we have in C. K. Barrett's book on Paul is something comparable in the field of Pauline studies. This work is the distilled thinking of a mature scholar who knows the territory well and can therefore provide a map that is both clear and sufficiently detailed to handle the complexity of the terrain.

C. K. Barrett, Emeritus Professor of Divinity, Durham University, has long been respected as a leading British Methodist scholar of Paul's letters and theology. His commentaries on Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians, and his exegetical studies, *Freedom and Obligation* (on Galatians) and *From First Adam to Last* (on the Christ/Adam typology in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15), are remarkable for their thoroughness, clarity, and careful judgments. It is not too much to say that he has set the standard for solid work in Pauline studies for several decades. Moreover, he has also written many other books on such diverse topics as the Pastoral Epistles, Luke, Acts, John, New Testament background, Jesus and the Gospels, church, ministry, sacraments, the Holy Spirit, biblical preaching; several collections of essays on Paul, John, and the New Testament; as well as numerous articles and reviews.

Since Paul was a complex and dynamic thinker, the material of the Pauline Epistles resists formulaic analysis or easy inference, though the list of those who have sought to pigeonhole Paul grows longer every year. Fortunately,

Barrett's readers will not find Paul straightjacketed by the author's own theological presuppositions or pressed into the service of the latest exegetical trend. He continues the tradition of solid, thoughtful commentary that has won the esteem of other scholars for so long. Barrett knows enough about the difficulties of Pauline chronology, the character of Acts as witness, and the problems of dating specific letters to avoid the thorny thicket of the development of Paul's thought. On the other hand, he has no need to rule out seemingly incompatible aspects of Paul's thinking by eliminating one of the poles of the apparent contradiction: He rightly sees, for example, that the polemical 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16 and Romans 9-11 could have been written by the same person; he can celebrate the equality of 1 Corinthians and also speculate that Paul may have written Colossians 3 with its household code.

If Barrett has a fault, it is his tendency to adhere rather closely to the Reformation traditions of reading Paul. For example, he reads Romans 1:16-17 as an expression of *sola fide*, Romans 7 as Paul's own autobiography, the word *telos* in Romans 10:4—"Christ is the *end* of the law"—as *finis* (termination) rather than goal or destination, and the ambiguous expression *pistis Iēsou Christou* or its equivalents as "faith *in* Jesus Christ" rather than "the faith/faithfulness *of* Jesus Christ." Three important side effects of this disposition are the stress on the individual believer, insufficient attention to the use of scripture (the Old Testament) in shaping Paul's thought, and the tendency to play down the role of apocalyptic in Pauline theology. This last issue may be the most important of the lot: While Barrett notes the important contributions of Ernst Käsemann and J. C. Beker in his brief bibliography, the force of their work, which challenges the Reformation synthesis in major ways, is not adequately reflected in Barrett's own thought about Paul.

This book would be an invaluable asset in any seminary or parish course on Paul and Pauline theology, were it not for the seriously exclusive language that runs through the text, not only in translations of Paul's letters but also in Barrett's own commentary. Beyond words like "fellowship" and "emasculate," which do appear, today's reader of either gender trips over phrases like "the fact that man is himself inwardly perverted" or "the righteousness a man must have if he is to stand before God." It would be a gift to the church if the author or an editor would revise this otherwise tremendously helpful book so it could be put to use in the places where it would do the most good.

A. Katherine Grieb
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Stendahl, Krister. *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. Pp. xii + 76. \$9.00.

For those familiar with Stendahl's witty, incisive, and provocative lecturing style, this book will be a delight, for its text is a transcription of four lectures he gave at the Australasian Theological Conference in Perth, Australia and of his inaugural lecture as the Kraft-Hiatt Professor of Christian Studies at Brandeis University. For those who were disappointed by his decision years ago not to do a commentary on Romans because he was "too overwhelmed," this book is the next best thing, an outline of some of the themes that would have been prominent in that commentary had it been written.

In an effort to make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar, he advises those who read the letter "to forget everything they know about it." He encourages his audience concerned with Romans "to forget all the other epistles, because to harmonize or homogenize them is the surest road to confusion." He suggests that justification by faith was not the center of Romans or of Paul's mission as a whole; instead, the promotion and defense of his gentile mission was central. And he argues throughout that Paul was born and remained a Jew until the day of his death. It is quite inappropriate, therefore, to speak of the conversion of Paul as if he left a decadent religion for a noble one, that is, abandoned his native Judaism for Christianity.

After the first chapter, "Paul and Israel," Stendahl follows the outline of Paul's letter to the Romans: Chapter 2 links the Spanish mission with needed redemption from universal sin (1:1-3:20 and chap. 15). Chapter 3 offers believing Abraham as the father of believing gentiles (4:3), treats Christ as the antitype of Adam (5:12-21), discusses the charge of antinomianism Paul's gospel of grace elicited (6:1-7:76), surveys Paul's discussion of the power of sin to pervert and subvert the good and holy law (7:7-25), and outlines the gospel of liberation not from guilt but from the tragedy sin inflicts, all in one lecture! Chapter 4 views Romans 9-11 as an argument against a gentile Christian arrogance that envisions the conversion of Jews. Chapter 5 deals with the importance of "*intellectual* worship" (my emphasis) and respect for conviction (chaps. 12-14). The RSV translation of Romans appended gives the reader a handy text for reference, whether the book is being read on the beach or in bed at night.

In the warm and personal foreword, Jaroslav Pelikan notes how Stendahl has "a remarkable capacity simultaneously to resonate to tradition and to be critical toward it." What we also find in this little book is a deft combination of the skills of an exegete and the convictions of a preacher. Stendahl engages the ancient world on its own terms without disengaging from the modern

world. His description of Paul's condemnation of the gentile Christian arrogance of the Roman church, his consistent emphasis on Paul's Jewishness, his criticism of the Christian mission to the Jews as imperialistic, and his critique of universalism, all resonate both to Paul and the modern world.

This is not a perfect book. Those already familiar with Stendahl will find here much repetition of what they have heard him say before, but these are lectures after all, and they were first transcribed from tape to raise money for University Lutheran Church in Cambridge. Then, fortunately, they were made available to us by Fortress Press. (The royalties still go to that University Lutheran Church.) Those who can see the twinkle in his eye will delight in hearing things about Paul that need to be said over and over again. This book would be an ideal guide to a short study of Paul by laity and a good refresher for ministers.

Calvin J. Roetzel
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Carroll, John T., and Joel B. Green, with others. *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995. Pp. xviii + 318. \$24.95.

Since 1988 a group formed by the Society of Biblical Literature has been taking stock of important research on the passion narratives and charting new directions for the study of early Christian interpretation of Jesus' death. Carroll and Green, who were key figures in that group, harvest some of the fruit of its work, devoting five chapters to the theme of Jesus' death in the Gospels, one to Paul's theology of the cross, and one to the death of Jesus in Hebrews, 1 Peter, and Revelation. Three other members of the SBL group contribute specific chapters on "Extracanonial Passion Narratives" (Robert E. Van Voorst), "The Old Testament and the Death of Jesus" (Joel Marcus), and "The Death of Jesus and the Meaning of Discipleship" (Donald Senior). Two further chapters, "Why Crucifixion? The Historical Meaning of the Cross" and "The Death of Jesus and the Meaning of the Atonement," are offered by Carroll and Green.

Although multiple methods are currently employed to investigate the enigma of the crucifixion, the authors first choose a literary approach to the Gospels. Taking seriously the distinctive structure and emphases of each document, they demonstrate the extent to which the passion narratives are embedded within the total presentation of the Gospels in which they are found. Mark's main point is to locate the sufferings of his persecuted readers within the framework of Jesus' messianic sufferings and the wider context of

God's bringing redemption to the whole world. Matthew's story presents the death of Jesus as the inevitable outcome of a life marked by fidelity to God's way of justice, "the culmination of bitter conflict between Jesus and the leaders of the people." For Luke the passion represents, on one level, "a final relentless assault upon the faithfulness of Jesus, a last desperate attempt by the forces of evil to undo Jesus' work of salvation." But it is also viewed as being purposed by God and embraced by Jesus as the inevitable outcome of his mission. John's narrative is the climax of a conflict between Jesus and "the world." No Jewish trial is necessary at the end of the Fourth Gospel because it has already taken place in the form of "one sustained public trial of Jesus by the Jewish authorities." Helpful as all this is, I found it frustrating that the authors do not immediately explore more of the theological issues raised by these narratives. For example, the redemptive significance of Jesus' words in Mark 10:45 and 14:22-25 is not examined *in situ*. One finally discovers an assessment of this matter in the last chapter of the book. Matthew's atonement theology is more satisfactorily treated. In general, however, the nature of Jesus' saving activity in the Synoptics is not adequately explored until chapter 11, where there is a treatment of the role of scripture in the passion narratives. The chapter on John is particularly weak in its examination of the sacrificial dimension to Jesus' death, concluding that he did not lift up the world's sin through a sacrificial offering of his lifeblood, but "his self-surrender mediates life instead, through its supreme offer of love for his friends."

It is the treatment of the Pauline evidence in barely twenty-nine pages that I find most unsatisfactory. True enough, interpreters of Paul have not always appreciated "the dazzling array of colors in the mural of Paul's theology of the cross," and systematic concerns have sometimes prevented a proper evaluation of the situational variation in Paul's teaching on this subject. But Carroll and Green are determined to exclude any sense of vicarious punishment from the Apostle's writings. God's wrath is only experienced "when one rejects God's offer of justice." The reason for this line of argument becomes obvious in the last chapter, where a particular version of the penal substitutionary theory of atonement comes under sustained attack. Appreciating the breadth of approach to the cross that Carroll and Green seek, I find it surprising that there was no interaction with someone like C. E. B. Cranfield on Romans or J. R. W. Stott more generally on the atonement.

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Schottruff, Luise. *Lydia's Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity*. Translated by Barbara Rumscheidt and Martin Rumscheidt. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995. Pp. xvi + 298. \$29.00.

Anyone willing to have her or his ideas about the social character of early Christianity turned upside down should read this book. Schottruff, a German biblical scholar and theologian, writes from a liberationist perspective that grants a preferential option to the experiences of the economically poor and powerless, and from a feminist perspective that recognizes that the majority of the world's poor, and the poorest of the poor, are women and children. In contrast to prevailing views of the social history of early Christianity, which emphasize a middle-class, or at least upwardly mobile, ethos for early Christian communities, Schottruff argues that poor free people and slaves constituted as much as 99 percent of the early Christian movement both in Palestine and beyond. She sees Christianity as one means by which poor people and slaves drew on the Jewish tradition of looking out for the "last," that is, for the poor and vulnerable, as a means of resistance against Roman economic exploitation and the dominating structures of the Roman-style patriarchal household.

This book's format should make it useful both as a scholarly historical resource and as a source of creative ideas for those involved in interpreting the New Testament in faith communities. The first section establishes her historical and hermeneutical foundations. The remaining three sections cover various New Testament texts under the general categories of women's everyday life, critiques of patriarchy, and the liberating practices of both women and men. Texts discussed include parables with female characters, beatitude of the poor, apocalyptic texts in the Synoptic Gospels, birth narratives, and Pauline and Deutero-Pauline texts relating to the social status of women and slaves. For each group of texts, Schottruff methodically begins with a discussion of textual-literary issues, then moves to social-historical questions, a critique of the history of interpretation, and finally, her own feminist interpretation of the text. Highlights include her discussions of women's paid and unpaid work, the effect of war on women's lives, and her interpretation of the apocryphal *Acts of Paul and Thekla* as an example of women's resistance in early Christianity.

An example of Schottruff's ability to show old issues in a new light occurs in her reevaluation of the significance of the verb "to be of service" (*diakonein*) in relationship to mutuality and egalitarianism in early Christian communities. Many discussions of religious service focus on whether women and slaves performed the same religious leadership/service roles as did free men. Schot-

troff, however, takes seriously the use of the term *diakonia* to refer to the menial labor of subjugated persons attending to the personal and domestic needs of those higher up in the social hierarchy. In keeping with this usage, she asks whether Christian free men “served” slaves and women by participating in such menial duties as food preparation, washing clothes, footwashing, and caring for the sick and imprisoned. Her qualified affirmative answer to this question suggests that conflicts over the division of domestic labor may be a largely unrecognized dynamic of early Christian history.

Schottroff has a remarkable way of looking into a text, acknowledging its androcentric imprint, and still drawing out of that text a voice rooted in resistance to the dominant political and economic power of the Roman empire. Never did I get the sense that she tries to downplay or to explain away male bias in the New Testament; nor does she back off when confronted by texts exhibiting signs of assimilation to Roman power and social structures. Yet by her singular focus on the concrete vulnerabilities of human life—poverty, violence, and lack of self-determination—Schottroff manages to pull models of resistance and hope out of the pages of the New Testament. Her words are not always comfortable to hear for those of us ensconced in middle-class North American or European life. My hunch, however, is that when we, the readers, see ourselves in the “painful burden of the *Pax Romana*” and rightfully squirm, we have perhaps moved one tiny step closer to the world of mutuality that Schottroff imagines.

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Wheeler, Sondra Ely. *Wealth as Peril and Obligation: The New Testament on Possessions*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995. Pp. xviii + 158. \$14.99.

Currently teaching Christian ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary, Wheeler has turned a 1992 Yale University dissertation into a readable and remarkably mature contribution to one of the most pressing issues facing contemporary Christian ethics, namely, how moral discourse within the church can appropriately engage (and be engaged by) the writings of the New Testament. I think it fair to say that the main point of the book is to provide an example of how such an engagement might take place. By no means is the topic of possessions simply an afterthought, but the significance of Wheeler’s work lies in the fact that her attention to process and method can profitably be applied to other moral *topoi* as well.

She begins with a "critical review of methodological proposals" offered by Gustafson, Birch and Rasmussen, Verhey, Hauerwas, and Ogletree. All insist on the importance of dealing with the New Testament, all recognize the problem presented by the New Testament's diversity, and all recommend different ways of negotiating the gap between the need for norm and the inconsistent witness of the texts. Responding to such views, she then offers her own "constructive proposal." This is a very rich discussion. At its heart is this thesis: "the moral authority of the New Testament for the Christian church arises from the link between its moral teachings and its more basic claims about God's intention to redeem the world through Christ" (p. 21). In a word: the New Testament's shaping of identity is more normative than its offer of specific rules. In this, she is certainly correct, and it is an important corrective. Two further aspects of her proposal: (1) In order to understand and translate the specific rules given by the New Testament, it is necessary to grasp, in Wayne Meeks' phrase, "the moral world" of the New Testament; (2) in the actual engagement with texts, method may not be separated from exegesis—not methods but the reading of actual texts should shape and invigorate the conversation.

Wheeler next undertakes close readings of Mark 10:17-31, Luke 12:22-34, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, and James 5:1-6. In each case, she considers the questions of critical scholarship concerning the historical setting and the literary status of the passage, then provides an original translation, then analyses the passage within the literary and religious themes of its composition, before considering "the moral use of the passage." She then tries to show how these passages fit within the overall "canonical context" of the New Testament. The point is once more paradigmatic. Although her readings are responsible and accurate, Wheeler knows well that they are not exhaustive. Her point is that any serious engagement with the New Testament on the issue of possessions cannot avoid such struggle with specific texts in all their resistant particularity.

Wheeler makes the transition from analysis to synthesis by providing a set of "themes in the New Testament's treatment of wealth" that identifies certain consistent patterns within the multiplicity of specific passages: wealth as a stumbling block, wealth as a competing object of devotion, wealth as a symptom of economic injustice, and wealth as a resource for human needs. These themes, in turn, become resources for the church's use of the New Testament as a "tool for moral discernment," by "learning to ask the canon's questions." Wheeler uses the themes listed above to propose, in turn, questions about liberty, questions about worship, questions about justice, and

questions about care. This stunning move alone would make her project valuable, for it reverses the assumption that the New Testament functions best as a set of answers rather than as a set of questions whose answers are to be found in the moral discernment of the community of faith.

Wheeler concludes with a short essay on "the necessary context of discernment: sharing a moral world." Just as the authority of the New Testament is to be found above all in its shaping of a certain identity based in the work of God through Jesus Christ, so is its witness to the role of possessions in human life persuasive to the degree that such an identity and such a construal of reality are alive in the readers of the New Testament. This book deserves careful and appreciative attention.

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Cobb, John B., Jr. *Grace and Responsibility: A Wesleyan Theology for Today*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995. Pp 192. \$14.95.

This book by one of North America's most distinguished theologians seeks to offer a theological framework for clarifying the identity of the United Methodist Church. It is an address to the church from one of its most articulate theological voices seeking to bridge the ideological divide that often threatens to tear the church apart. As such it is an exemplary piece of "church theology" that may be studied with profit not only by United Methodists but also by members of other mainline denominations caught up in conflicts about the application of heritage to contemporary challenge, about the relationship between denominational identity and wider social relevance.

The first chapter of the book, appropriately titled "Making Connections," seeks to place some of the contemporary issues facing the church in dialogue with the concerns of John Wesley. Admitting that many of the issues that preoccupy us are scarcely addressed by Wesley, Cobb finds in Wesley's concern for growth in grace and for finding holiness and happiness in this world the promise of helpful avenues from which to approach vexing issues like sexuality, the plurality of religion, and the environmental crisis.

The next four chapters take themes from Wesley's theology as the starting point for developing a more contemporary but still Wesleyan perspective that can help Methodists confront the challenges that face all Christians today. This project begins with a chapter on "God and the World." Here Cobb makes use of Wesley's Arminian view of salvation, which entails collaboration

between God and the human in the saving project (which, however, always depends utterly upon the divine initiative), to illuminate the relation between the divine and the world. Cobb says, "the interactive character of the relation between God and the creature, so brilliantly analyzed by Wesley in relation to grace and responsibility, can illuminate the whole God-world relation." Not surprisingly, Cobb finds process philosophy and theology to offer a fitting elaboration of this theme not only in relation to natural science but also with respect to the ecological issues with which Cobb has been so long and fruitfully engaged.

The following chapter, "Love and Faith," offers a critical appreciation of Wesley's views on these central topics. In two chapters on the "Way of Salvation" Cobb attends more directly to Wesley's own views and the way in which his notions of assurance, growth in grace, and even perfection can provide helpful grounding for contemporary reflection on the moral and spiritual life.

The last three chapters address issues on the contemporary church agenda. In "The Role of Law" Cobb argues that a recovery of Wesley's views on the demands of the gospel for life in the world can be helpful in addressing issues like consumerism and the ecological crisis. In "Openness to Difference" Cobb suggests that Wesley's views on other religions and on those who held differing interpretations of Christianity could be understood in ways that make for a positive appropriation of and engagement with the situation of pluralism within the church and between Christianity and other religions. Finally, Cobb argues for a new synthesis of scripture, reason, and experience that does not simply repeat the views of Wesley but promotes a scriptural view in harmony with lived experience and serious reflection.

In all of this Cobb seeks to offer a "unifying basis for theology for the United Methodist Church." While some may believe that Cobb has conceded too much to conservative interpreters of Wesley (as in his uncritical use of the Aldersgate traditions or his downplaying of more radical aspects of Wesley's ethic), others may find that the book is too clearly a liberal manifesto of a process type. In fact, however, Cobb has shown how important it is for the church's best minds to take seriously the challenges of the life of the church and to take the risk of an appropriation and interpretation of the traditions that may inform without dictating fruitful ways into the future. The book, clearly and gracefully written, is both accessible to and rewarding for the nonspecialist.

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Weber, Hans-Ruedi. *The Courage to Live: A Biography of Suzanne de Diétrich*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995. Pp. x + 168. \$15.90.

For persons interested in the history of the ecumenical movement and particularly in the contribution of women, this new biography of Suzanne de Diétrich is important. Diétrich, without doubt, was for nearly half a century one of the leaders and "workhorses" of the World Student Christian Federation and later of the World Council of Churches. Often serving in several capacities simultaneously, Diétrich's most significant and lasting contribution was her pioneering work in developing ecumenical hymnals and liturgies and leading participatory Bible studies, many of which were later published and distributed worldwide. Though she lacked formal training in biblical scholarship (she was educated to be an engineer), she knew personally and sought continuously the counsel and critique of some of the best scholars of her time, individuals such as Wilhelm Vischer, Pierre Bonnard, Oscar Cullmann, and Gerhard von Rad. She was extraordinarily creative, but likewise she was skilled in utilizing the insights of biblical experts and making their work available to laypersons, especially to university and secondary-school students.

The author of this biography, Hans-Ruedi Weber, was from 1971 until 1988 the director of biblical studies for the WCC, a post actually created because of Diétrich's work. He carefully traces her long life from her birth in 1891 until her death in 1981. Born with a congenital physical disability into the home of a well-known industrialist in Alsace in northeastern France, Suzanne doubtless benefitted economically from her family, but in many respects they became more a liability to her than an asset. She knew her limitations but pushed herself unmercifully in terms of her physical capabilities. Almost until the time she died, she continued to study, teach, write, and travel as if she had no physical handicap or restraints. She claimed to be neither a theologian nor a biblical scholar, but in many respects she ranked with the best.

Some readers will find her ready acceptance of the cultural and social restrictions imposed upon women disconcerting, but none can accuse her of lacking courage and foresight. Her dispute with Jacques Ellul over the Munich accord of 1938 (when France and Great Britain ceded Czechoslovakia to Hitler in a futile attempt to avoid war) is indicative. Courageously and prophetically, Diétrich wrote: "Are there decisive times when, like an individual, a whole people will sell its soul to save its life? I believe there are." Ellul responded with a scathing attack on Diétrich's political and biblical views, but looking back, it is obvious that Diétrich, not Ellul, was right.

I found the book to be interesting and significant, but hardly exciting. Though well organized and thorough, it is more an account of Diétrich's multiple activities and contributions than a disclosure of her intimate thoughts, fears, and aspirations. I have read and reread the book, but I am not satisfied that I know who Suzanne de Diétrich really was. This may be due to my unrealistic expectations or to a lack of sources available to the author. But given access to her journals, her correspondence (some of which is missing), and her extensive writings, as well as to dozens of interviews and written comments by persons who knew and worked with Diétrich, one could, I believe, expect a more vigorous and intimate account. It is unfortunate, moreover, that neither a bibliography of Diétrich's extensive publications nor an index of this volume was included.

Princeton Seminary friends will be gratified by the references to Gibson and Sara Winter, as well as to Richard Shaull, all of whom knew Diétrich and speak of her significant life and work.

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Shenk, Wilbert R. *Write the Vision: The Church Renewed*. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International; Leominster, England: Gracewing, 1995. Pp. viii + 119. \$10.00.

This volume is one of the initial offerings in a new series on Christian Mission and Modern Culture, which promises to be of extreme importance to the churches of the West and their leaders. The series is the fruit of a broadly based research venture articulating a "missiology of Western culture," using the contributions of a number of scholars from various Western nations.

Wilbert Shenk, a Mennonite, is eminently qualified to introduce the theme and agenda of the series. Based on his own long experience as a mission administrator (Mennonite Board of Missions) and a mission scholar and teacher (Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Fuller School of World Mission), he has been the leader and guiding force behind the research venture captured in this series. The project is a companion to a number of other, more locally focused movements taking up a similar agenda, most notably, Gospel and Culture (United Kingdom), Gospel and Cultures Trust (New Zealand) and the Gospel and Our Culture Network (North America). The project "(1) examines modern/postmodern culture from a missional point of view; (2) develops the theological agenda that the church in modern culture must address in order to recover its own integrity; and (3) tests fresh

conceptualizations of the nature and mission of the church as it engages modern culture.”

Shenk calls his book a “reconnaissance,” a historical assessment of the church’s engagement with modern culture. His thesis is simple and practical: “when the church in the West is truly renewed, it will be a church with integrity and a clear sense of its mission to its own culture.” Both integrity and mission, he asserts, have been relinquished under the imprint of the long history of Christendom.

In four somewhat self-contained chapters this thesis is carried forward. In the first a survey of voices against the grain over the last few centuries shows why the notion of “Christian society” or “Christian nation” must be acknowledged to be a distracting myth leading the church to see itself as the “chaplain to society,” a much different mode of life from a church that relates to its setting in “self-consciously missional terms.” In the end, what the church in Christendom forfeits is its integrity as a community shaped by the gospel. (The voices in this chapter are predominantly British, with a mixture of continental European ones. North America is more directly in view in subsequent chapters.)

In the second chapter Shenk describes the way the modern church, living out of the inheritance of Christendom, is “a church severed from mission.” This severing derives from an unwarranted dichotomy between mission and evangelism, which locates mission in territories outside of Christendom and construes evangelism as the effort to reclaim to faith those living in already “Christianized” lands. Shenk argues instead that “the church’s normal relationship to every culture is that of missionary encounter.”

The character of evangelization itself is the theme of the third chapter. In the wake of Christendom’s thinking and the effects of the Enlightenment on modern culture, evangelism has turned into “a specialized ministry largely separated from the church.” In perhaps his most telling—if tentative—critique of the life and mission of the modern church, Shenk asks whether an evangelism accommodated to the modern confidence in technique does not fall prey to the same failure that characterizes modern society’s fragmentation of life: Are “secularized modes of evangelization” not “sources of alienation rather than means to personal and social reconciliation?”

The bottom line, for Shenk, is ecclesiology, and in the fourth chapter he explores the renewal of the church’s “mission consciousness” as foundational for the modern church. The Great Commission rightly understood, he says, is “a foundational ecclesiological statement” that institutionalizes mission as the

“controlling norm” of the church. Today’s frontier must be approached in “missional rather than pastoral terms.”

This book is must reading for leaders of the church in North America. Along with much other recent literature that speaks in a similar vein, Shenk’s work articulates a vision for a church beyond Christendom. What many voices miss is that this recovery of identity lies directly in a recovery of mission, rightly and fully understood. Shenk joins an increasing chorus that points to the omission and envisions the way forward.

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Vallet, Ronald E., and Charles E. Zech. *The Mainline Church’s Funding Crisis: Issues and Possibilities*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Manlius, NY: REV/Rose Publishing, 1995. Pp. xxv + 170. \$16.00.

The authors represent two disciplines. Ronald E. Vallet is minister for stewardship and mission support for American Baptist Churches of New York State. He is also the former executive director for both the Commission for Stewardship of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. and the Ecumenical Center for Stewardship Studies. Charles E. Zech is a professor of economics at Villanova University.

Mission funding in the mainline denominations has reached crisis proportions. Membership is in decline, and support for denominational mission has reached an all-time low. The authors assert that the trend began over a century ago and is not likely to change in the near future. The first chapter presents the current state of the mission funding crisis in mainline denominations in the United States and Canada and in the Uniting Church in Australia. Ample evidence is given to illustrate the depressing situation of the mainline churches as contrasted with some of the nonmainline churches that are experiencing growth in membership and benevolence giving.

Chapter 2 focuses on social-science theories that attempt to explain the funding crisis in mainline denominations. Zech explores possible explanations, including a lack of confidence in the denomination, an increase in costs for operating local congregations, and a growing interest in nondenominational missions, including local mission projects. He concludes that no general consensus can be reached on any one theory as an explanation for the present dilemma, except to say that there is an indication that members now seem to prefer designated giving.

On the basis of what is outlined in the first two chapters, Zech then presents four recommendations from the social-science perspective to resolve the funding crisis by restoring confidence in denominations: (1) external evaluation of denominational mission boards by entities of the secular world on a regular basis; (2) annual reports distributed to *every* member of the denomination (not just to ministers and selected laypersons); (3) introducing the competition of the marketplace, making denominational mission compete for scarce financing with nondenominational mission; and (4) disposing of denomination mission funding altogether, allowing congregations to select every mission activity. However, these solutions for the church are enmeshed in the assumptions and presuppositions of modernity. As such, these proposals would be inadequate.

Drawing heavily on the work of Walter Brueggemann and William Willimon, Vallet describes the congregational life of the church since the Enlightenment. He calls for reform in the church, particularly in the areas of biblical interpretation, worship, preaching, and theological education. This author asserts that one major reason for the funding crisis in mainline denominations is the lack of importance that theology and biblical literacy play in denominational life. The church has adopted the assumptions of the modern world and is enslaved by the presuppositions and attitudes that result. The metaphor employed for the current state of mainline denominations is that of Israel in exile. Hope comes from the Bible. Just as God did not abandon the exiles, so God may yet breathe life into the "dry bones" of the church.

In the concluding two chapters Vallet writes a prescription for the church in the postmodern age. In order for the church to be renewed, he asserts, denominations must be willing to risk radical change. This renewal centers in worship, preaching, and better preparation of ministers by theological schools. Theology and biblical insight must be the driving forces for the new day, not allegiance to the structures of culture and the marketplace.

The book does an excellent job of describing the crisis. It also demonstrates its own assertion that we are entering an age in which the scientific positivism of modernity is no longer adequate. Social science cannot adequately describe the present situation nor prescribe for denominational recovery. Perhaps the most radical and helpful assertion of the book is that the real issues facing the church in the postmodern era are not financial. Money problems are only symptoms of the predicament. The real issues are theological.

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Neuger, Christie Cozad, ed. *The Arts of Ministry: Feminist-Womanist Approaches*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996. Pp. xi + 211. \$21.99.

Last week in class, having worked our way patiently through a series of readings that challenged distorted views of women's lives in conventional therapy and orthodox theology, several people asked once again the complicated question "What then shall we do?" Little did I expect that in her introduction—our next reading assignment—Christie Cozad Neuger would sound so much like she had sat in on the class.

The questions addressed in *The Arts of Ministry* by scholars in practical-theological disciplines are the very questions raised by students, clergy, and people of faith struggling with moral and religious imperatives to recognize the voices of the marginalized and to create a genuinely postpatriarchal church and world. Neuger writes, "I have been deeply motivated by the haunting and powerful questions from the students and clergy in feminist-oriented classes when they ask things like: 'What about the rural women in my parish who don't believe in sharing their experiences with anyone?' 'What about the people in my church who aren't even sure a woman should be in the pulpit—I don't want to come across as a radical.' 'I don't know how to help my parishioners move from their personal struggles to seeing the larger picture in which their lives are based.'"

The authors of this book attempt to respond to these kinds of questions. They hope to bridge the gaps between theory and practice in ministerial contexts, while at the same time deepening understandings of the theories behind new constructions of practical theology.

While fitting a course on gender, the book will prove helpful for religious leaders in a variety of arenas, as reflected in its contents. As a pastoral theologian teaching a course in religion and personality, I divided the assigned reading into two groups—those chapters related to pastoral care and counseling and those on other "arts" in the practical disciplines. We started with the latter, and hence with Christine M. Smith's excellent chapter on "Preaching as an Art of Resistance." As with all the essayists, her approach is rooted in the commitments of liberation theology to resistance to suffering and injustice. When we begin with critical reflection on experiences of domination and oppression, we discover new categories—weeping, confession, and resistance—to organize the preaching moment and, by extension, many practical-theological moments. Essays by Carol Lakey Hess on Christian education, Judith Orr on church administration, and Emilie M. Townes on ethics as core to womanist practice in ministry round out the practical-

theology-type chapters. More strictly within the pastoral disciplines, Kathleen D. Billman addresses pastoral care as an "Art of Community," Neuger pastoral counseling as an "Art of Personal Political Activism," and Pamela Holliman mentoring as an "Art of Intentional Thriving Together." Some essays negotiate more directly and more imaginatively than others the difficult connections between the good ideas in liberation theology and the questions these ideas pose for ministry. Among others, Smith, Hess, and Neuger excel in the richness of their location in particular struggles and the emerging imaginative theological constructions.

A politically conscientious male colleague wondered if the book's hyphenated subtitle threatens to subsume womanism and noticed the smaller number of womanist voices in the volume. This is a viable concern, although based more on form than content. Others beside Townes take up important questions of the intersection of class, race, and sex and use a variety of non-European-American resources. More important, can this book help guide the next steps of ministry in a complex world? We don't exactly hear concrete advice on how to talk to rural or conservative women or how to unite political and personal transformation in the parish. But the text significantly advances the conversation in a new context, even if this is not the final or most adequate statement. If ministry and theology are "messy," as Hess argues, and as much art as science, then a fully adequate statement would betray the rich realities of living faith itself.

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Culbertson, Philip L. *Counseling Men*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994. Pp. 96. \$9.00.

There is a great deal of useful information about men as well as observations about male behavior packed into *Counseling Men*, a book by Philip L. Culbertson in the Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling Series. Culbertson is an Episcopal priest and Director of Pastoral Studies, College of St. John the Evangelist, Auckland, New Zealand. He held a similar position at the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee. Work and its importance, loss and its difficulties, having a father and being a father, being married, and having friends are some of the male issues considered in a sympathetic way. Similarly, shame, fear, powerlessness, emotional repression, oppression, and anxiety about intimacy are themes used to present a picture of men as often

emotionally crippled, with fragile egos, imprisoned by cultural roles and images of masculinity at home or in the workplace.

Although I am in agreement with many of his observations of male behavior, sometimes the picture of men Culbertson paints is overly sympathetic. For example, in a chapter entitled "Facing the Masculine Ego," the author suggests that "most men feel themselves to be the victims of structures (racist, classist, and sexist) spinning out of control." Later on, the author says that because masculinity is a fragile thing, "men do not always tell the truth." "Telling lies is easy for men." Culbertson then contends that because men are frightened by their own powerlessness, "harassment is a survival issue." Abuse of power by men is softened by suggesting that male violence and rage in the home are irrational and inappropriate acts of desperation and "the product of self-destructive urges misdirected externally." Or this: "Emotionally crippled men can barely take care of their own needs in crisis, and they are ill-equipped to be sensitive to the emotional needs of others." While *Counseling Men* does not overlook patriarchy, it presents men as more vulnerable than evil, more victims than oppressors. While it is helpful for pastoral conversations with or about men to set aside harsh judgments in order to respond empathically to their struggles, Culbertson's sketch is insufficiently attentive to the dark side of what men have been and continue to do.

Even though I judge Culbertson's picture of masculinity as overly sympathetic, his is still a well-documented book. The chapter on friendship is an excellent resource for thinking through what men fear and need from friends. Culbertson's choice of male themes is comprehensive enough. Even though the title of the book implies a focus on counseling with men, its benefits are much broader. Most ministry with men is incidental conversation in the parking lot after a committee meeting or alongside some activity like repairing the roof or reworking the budget. Because ministry with men is often "by the way," the topics covered in *Counseling Men* will sensitize ministers to ways of maximizing the benefit of those conversations.

Herbert Anderson
Catholic Theological Union

Lester, Andrew D. *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995. Pp. 168. \$16.99.

While depth psychologies typically focus attention on the unconscious past of the troubled person, and cognitive or family-systems therapies concentrate on present perceptions and events, Andrew Lester's most recent book presses

pastors to attend more carefully to the impact of the *future* on the predicament of the parishioner. Clearly indebted to traditional psychotherapeutic approaches, Lester nonetheless critiques them for neglecting the often unconscious future in shaping past and present sensibilities. The human self is constituted with "the capacity for self-transcendent consciousness [which] allows us to remember the events of the past and to anticipate that the future is coming, both of which affect the way we live in the present." We are creatures not only of habit but of hope, and "hope, although rooted in the past and acted out in the present, receives its energy from the future" (pp. 14-15).

Lester, Professor of Pastoral Theology and Counseling at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, develops in the first six chapters an intricate pastoral theology of hope and despair. In the remaining four chapters he delineates how this theology informs clinical situations of pastoral care and counseling. He draws on an elaborate array of theorists, including, among others, philosophers Ernst Bloch and Gabriel Marcel, theologians Augustine, Kierkegaard, Tillich, and Moltmann, and psychologist Victor Frankl, and proponents of social constructivist and narrative approaches, to argue for a pastoral theology rooted in human temporality, the capacity for experiencing time simultaneously in past, present, and future tenses. Current clinical preoccupation with past and present circumstances has eclipsed a similarly necessary examination of future perceptions or *future stories* of the counselee.

These future stories are implicitly included in what Stephen Crites and others have called the narrative quality of human experience. The raw material of countless stimuli experienced around and within persons are fashioned into numerous smaller stories that in turn congeal into a central or core narrative, one's own personal story: "We do not sense that we really know someone until we begin to hear that person's story and identify the core narratives. . . . Revealing our stories, likewise, is the only effective way to communicate our sense of self to another person" (p. 30).

Parishioners seek out pastoral intervention at precisely those times when their core narratives appear blocked, confused, or otherwise on trajectory toward future tragedy. Crises are fearful eruptions into consciousness of untenable anticipated endings to one's future story. So too, grief and bereavement become here "future stories lost," and panic attacks likewise are viewed as expressions of intense apprehension about the future. Thus, caregivers who assist persons in reconstructing their pasts "must also attend to the despair that comes because of a person's refusal, or inability, to confront the future."

As agents of the God who raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead, Lester argues, pastoral caregivers are uniquely stationed to open *transfinite* hope—hope beyond hope in facing inevitable death—far surpassing ordinary, finite hopes for, say, receiving a pay raise or getting accepted into a certain school. The final chapters, then, instruct pastors in the specifics of steering apathetic persons to more creative possibilities. Pastors are encouraged to invite stories about the future, employing guided imagery and “as if” conversations that allow “consideration of potentially threatening events on the horizon.” Dream exploration, particularly involving daydreams from which future reality is composed, and free association around anticipated events such as “next Christmas” or “empty nest” or “your mother finds out,” are already familiar techniques adapted as profitably to a future orientation as to past or present ones. Lester helps pastors overcome resistance in parishioners whose future stories evoke dread or shame, and he outlines processes for deconstructing and reconstructing dysfunctional scenarios frequently involving theological components such as negative God-images. Verbatim snippets of conversations from Lester’s own pastoral counseling provide helpful grounding throughout these concluding chapters.

Lester’s clarion corrective to current practices of care and counseling is so reasonable as to compel us to wonder why it is emerging only now. Perhaps because his case, once established, is readily accepted, the book at times becomes somewhat repetitive. In place of discussion of yet another theorist supporting his argument or immoderate reminders of the power of future stories, I would have welcomed further discussion of Lester’s enticing, but less developed, musings that the eschatological God revealed in Christ may have surprises in store far beyond even our wildest imaginings or human projections, thereby fusing a decisive kinship between hope and trust. But these comments should be taken as odd compliments to an invaluable, pioneering contribution to pastoral understanding and practice.

Robert C. Dykstra

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary

McCurley, Foster R. *Wrestling with the Word: Christian Preaching from the Hebrew Bible*. Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996. Pp. xii + 243. \$20.00.

At the heart of McCurley’s book is the conviction that proclamation and exegesis are essentially linked for the simple reason that “all the biblical

books were originally sermons for their days." Therefore, preaching focuses on the same two questions that exegesis treats, namely, "What is God doing?" and "What is the situation of the audience—theologically understood—in which God is doing it?" The second of these questions implies McCurley's strong commitment to historical exegesis; he cites Luther's view that in order to understand the prophecies (for example), one must know "how matters lay in the land." For Luther, of course, that meant knowing how the Bible itself sets forth the historical situation. For McCurley, it means a thoroughgoing commitment to the methods of historical criticism; and the bulk of the book treats their application to preaching texts chosen from *The Revised Common Lectionary* (with cross references to the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *The Book of Common Prayer*).

In the opening section, McCurley sets forth his own understanding of "the Bible as the Word of God." Especially useful is his discussion of how the Christian preacher must wrestle with the tensions as well as the harmony between the two Testaments. The central and longest section consists of exegetical treatments of fifteen pericopes. In the final section are eight sermons from the passages treated.

This format is itself admirable. In an environment—namely, modern theological education—where biblical studies and homiletics are only infrequently brought into fruitful contact, it is an act of courage for a homiletician to publish his own critical exegeses and sermons. Yet I wonder whether McCurley will persuade many readers that the detailed exegetical work he demonstrates is necessary or even beneficial for preaching. The book suffers from an excess of thoroughness. For each text, McCurley works his way through all "the criticisms"—text, source, redaction—that have become traditional in seminary study. But McCurley's theological insights, though often well targeted, are submerged in exploration of details that will not preach. The imbalance is greatest in the treatment of the Pentateuchal narratives. Much time is spent on translational issues: is it a "ladder" or a "mount" that Jacob sees in the vision at Bethel? The various redactional layers are carefully separated, along with their individual "proclamations," although in my judgment it is doubtful whether JE or D has a message that can be preached in isolation from the text's final form. But relatively little attention is paid to the meaning of each passage in its narrative context, although that would seem to hold the greatest possibility for awakening the congregation's interest. In the Joseph story, for example, it would be helpful to hear less about the historical veracity of famine in Egypt and more about

the dynamics of blessing and forgiveness, themes central to this story that surely find reflections in the gospel.

Although McCurley wisely offers his own sermons as examples rather than models, it is disappointing that the fruit of his study is not more consistently evident here. He is at his best when working with the poetic images of the text (e.g., the fading grass in Isaiah 40), yet too often the controlling image comes from contemporary culture (e.g., bungee jumping). In the exegetical essays, he shows a keen sensitivity to the original historical setting, evoking the situation of exile with a poignancy that is lyrical. Yet the sermons themselves regularly begin not with the historical or narrative setting of the text but with one or several contemporary anecdotes, so that as much as half the sermon elapses before he turns to the text.

Most telling perhaps is the fact that McCurley's regular homiletical move to the New Testament often seems sudden and obligatory. His central concern is to preach from the Hebrew Bible in a way that both acknowledges its particular perspectives and illumines the connection with the gospel. It is a goal that should be held high among both biblical scholars and homileticians but, sadly, is not. Yet McCurley's own lack of close *theological* work with the Old Testament texts obscures what Christians have always understood as the deep unity of scripture proceeding from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Though he has indeed wrestled hard with the Word, he has not yet claimed its full blessing.

Ellen F. Davis

Virginia Theological Seminary

Ward, James, and Christine Ward. *Preaching from the Prophets*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995. Pp. 128. \$12.95.

"They [the prophets] have a queer way of talking, like people who, instead of proceeding in an orderly manner, ramble off from one thing to the next, so that you cannot make head or tail of them or see what they are getting at."

This quip by Martin Luther, cited by Gerhard von Rad (*Old Testament Theology*, 2.33), surely reflects the reaction of many, clergy and laity alike, who venture into the realm of prophetic literature. Yet oddities notwithstanding, the legacy of ancient Israel's prophets returns time and again to demand attention from the community of faith. Although theological reflection in our time may not consent to the view, popular a century or so ago, that the prophets represented that which was "good" in ancient Israelite religion (as

opposed to the "bad" priestly stratum), the late twentieth century is nevertheless a time when prophetic literature stands at the center of much Old Testament exegesis. And for good reason. The prophetic summons to faithfulness in belief and in praxis addresses a crucial challenge—the crucial challenge, in the prophets' view—of life in any age.

James Ward and Christine Ward have succeeded in demonstrating just how vital the prophetic word is for us who populate the globe at this juncture of human history. In their brief but instructive monograph, they allow the prophets to speak *their* words, but in ways that address *our* distinctive issues.

The format of the volume is logical and clear. After an initial section that addresses the place of prophetic literature in the larger theological tradition of the church (chapters 1 and 2), there is a how-to-do-it discussion of selecting texts from the prophetic corpus and developing sermons oriented to those texts (chapter 3). The final chapters (4 and 5) discuss two angles of approach to prophetic preaching, that which begins with a text and that which begins with a contemporary situation. Preachers themselves, Ward and Ward illustrate their discussion by providing sermons one might preach on various prophetic texts. (These "sermons" are actually running theological commentaries on given texts and for that reason are all the more helpful in that they provide the preacher with valuable material out of which to craft his or her own sermons.) At the heart of Ward and Ward's homiletical method is a movement from some "problem" (a "significant moral, social, or spiritual problem") to a "resolution" ("an answer . . . which grows out of the biblical witness") to a "new possibility for the hallowing of life." While this dialectic is hardly revolutionary, its value is well attested in their sermonic examples.

But the great strength of Ward and Ward's work is that they not only deal in a responsible fashion with the prophetic text itself but allow (not force) the text to speak to important personal and societal issues of the day. Among those issues, addressed generally throughout the book but specifically in chapter 5, are inclusiveness, environmental responsibility, the financially needy, the power of language, collegiality in the church, and Christian-Jewish relations.

It is difficult to find flaws in such an excellent book, but this reviewer occasionally wished for a more in-depth treatment of the prophetic text. There are only occasional references to the Hebrew, with the result that the exegesis is not so much exegesis of the words of the prophets as we have received them as exegesis of the words of the English translators (in this case, the NRSV). This results in no major catastrophes, but it occasionally fails to turn up a genuine treasure. Case in point: In their treatment of Habakkuk 2:4,

Ward and Ward are guided by the NRSV's "the righteous shall live by their faith," that is, the faith of the person(s). That is the way Paul read the text, of course, and Paul is by no means bad company. But since Ward and Ward go on to talk about the gracious persistence of God as the ground of human faith, how enlightening it would have been to point out that the prophetic word is actually *be'emunatbo*, literally "his faithfulness" (God's faithfulness?), and that the prophet may have left us with an intentional and irresistible double entendre.

Quibbles aside, *Preaching from the Prophets* is a fine exercise in reading and proclaiming the prophetic message for our time. Those who are interested in preaching and those who are interested in the prophets will find valuable help here.

James D. Newsome

Columbia Theological Seminary

Procter-Smith, Marjorie. *Praying with Our Eyes Open: Engendering Feminist Liturgical Prayer*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995. Pp. 176. \$16.95.

"We are searching for the word for fire, in a burning room," writes Marjorie Procter-Smith in the prologue to her brilliantly insightful new "book about prayer for women who don't—or can't—pray." Procter-Smith, Associate Professor of Liturgy and Worship at Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, has, gratefully, delved deeper into a theme introduced by her previous volume, *In Her Own Rite: Constructing Feminist Liturgical Tradition* (1990).

Beginning with the assertion that traditional Christian public prayer, as well as private personal prayer, is based upon "problematic assumptions" about the nature of God and humankind, she suggests a new prayer praxis whose form and content do *not* continue to reinforce and spiritualize the many forms of oppression. Undertaken while inhabiting a "room on fire," this search for new words is no mean accomplishment! The resulting volume is intriguing, troubling, countercultural, visionary, and faithful.

Procter-Smith's probing questions go incisively to the heart of traditional liturgical practice: "Whose interests are protected in controlling the content and meaning of Christian eucharistic praying?" "What must happen in order for women to be free to address God truthfully in public prayer?" She posits answers by laying a table with hearty spiritual and theological food in chapters with such themes as "Bestowing Ourselves to Silence: The Prayer of Refusal."

An excellent chapter on Christian feminist eucharistic praying offers an invaluable, thoroughgoing exploration of historic eucharistic forms while suggesting prayer patterns of feminist resistance and transformation within that liturgical framework. One implication here is that new language also requires new forms. Since prayers of thanksgiving and petition, for instance, traditionally presuppose the goodness and omnipotence of God, only a prayer of *lament* can truthfully address questions of profound suffering—where terrible harm has been done that cannot be undone. Difficult and sometimes terrifying work, this reimagining of prayer! These are not easy questions, given women's experience of oppression and abuse, nor do they *lead* to easy questions. Procter-Smith points out how Christian feminist reinterpretation of God is generated out of an experience of absence, of lack of response to our sufferings. A young woman who was raped at age sixteen is—movingly—quoted commenting on Psalm 27: “I have asked one thing of the Lord”—please heal me, and please don't let that ever happen to anyone else again. On the day of evil, I was not concealed. . . . I was an open target. I was a lamb, and the shepherd was asleep.”

Praying with Our Eyes Wide Open is a challenging work in its disturbing analysis of why, deep down, so many women of faith find ourselves “unable” to pray. Procter-Smith has the courage not only to critique patriarchal notions of prayer but also to probe the problems inherent even in contemporary feminist theologies that, by implication, elevate martyrdom or birth/mothering imagery as prime ways of understanding crucifixion and resurrection.

Beyond critique and analysis, Procter-Smith offers a range of fresh, thought-provoking alternatives for engendering feminist prayer. Suggested strategies regarding the symbolism of Jesus, for example, include oblique rather than direct incorporation through seasonal or nonverbal symbolic referents; addressing Jesus in the context of his relationships with biblical women; and, most dramatic and prophetic of all (and thus “the most threatening to patriarchal church power”), employing Sophia imagery to confront the mythologizing of Jesus in prayer and ritual.

Marjorie Procter-Smith's work is a prize landmark in the evolution of feminist liturgical consciousness. The summary strategies she offers for “feminist emancipatory prayer” will prove essential to our continued task, particularly in their challenge to cultivate ongoing reform, respect differences, claim the liturgical center of our tradition, and develop vocabularies for lament and anger. May the fruits of this exploration issue in future volumes of

notably liberated praise by women who have once *again* “found their voices” in prayer!

Gail Anderson Ricciuti
Downtown United Presbyterian Church
Rochester, NY

Old, Hughes Oliphant. *Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Worship*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995. Pp. xi + 370. \$20.00.

Monographs on the meaning of prayer and the fruits of praying are legion, but in this recent title the author makes an in-depth study of the types of prayer traditionally used in services of worship. As a liturgical scholar, with a doctorate in the field and over two decades of parish leadership in America, Old was well suited to be elected a Fellow in the Center of Theological Inquiry at Princeton, where he wrote two other books: *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (1992) and *Themes and Variations for a Christian Doxology* (1992). He calls this most recent volume a “workbook,” but it is far more. It is an unusual blending of resource materials, basic liturgical theology, and careful biblical and historical research, all within the framework of a variety of worship services in and to which he addresses counsel and instruction that are well balanced, informed, and doubtlessly to be discovered viable.

A helpful introduction outlines the author’s intention and his own personal approach to the subject of public and private (devotional) prayer and includes brief discussions of “The Art of Leading in Prayer” and the importance of “The Language and Imagery of Prayer.” There follows a series of comprehensive studies of the traditional prayers every parish minister leads and engages in each Sunday (the invocation, the Psalms as prayer, prayers of confession and supplication, prayers of illumination, prayers of intercession, common prayers, benedictions and doxologies), a section on hymnody, and, finally, a discussion of the ordering of public prayer. In each section there is a wealth of substance—historical, theological, pastoral—including many examples from scripture, hymnody, and practical experience. The result is a solid and stimulating volume for which leaders in worship and prayer will be grateful.

Altogether, this useful book is a mosaic with a liturgical design that will fortify the “common order” in our Presbyterian tradition, sadly in need of enlightenment and suffering from neglect. Moreover, a monograph of this kind counterbalances the many writings of liturgical theorists whose experi-

ence with parish ministries is nil and who are apt to "waste their sweetness on the desert air" (Thomas Gray). A few caveats, however, are in order from those of us who have been in and out of the liturgical dialogue both in school and in parish leadership. These are designed as "in-my-opinion comments." Old's inclusion of an invocation in the stated service of Presbyterian worship is questionable, especially since the call to worship implies that "God is already there." The Gloria Patri has a set place after the recital or chanting of a psalm (see the quote from Henry Sloane Coffin in my *Presbyterian Worship*, 2d ed., p. 31). More instruction is needed regarding the use of prayerful silence, especially during the distribution and partaking of the elements in holy communion. Oddly, a prayer for the communion of saints is omitted from the communion rite. Easter Sunday is a misnomer; it is Easter Day. Fuller emphasis on the general pattern of Presbyterian worship as a whole affects the character of the prayers: Bible (substance), theology (shape), and tradition (movement). With larger churches, choral elements enrich the quality and psychological pattern of the more lengthy prayers (e.g., Nunc Dimittis, selected canticles, and service music section of *The Presbyterian Hymnal*). These, however, are some of a number of minor glitches in an otherwise thorough and scholarly treatise, which, it is hoped, many will "take up and read."

Donald Macleod
Princeton Theological Seminary

Shain, Barry Alan. *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Pp. xix + 394. \$39.50.

For anyone puzzled by the current religious enthusiasm for eliminating welfare, stifling immigration, and honoring local prejudices in the public schools and the courts, this book is must reading. Shain argues that from the beginning Americans have defended the rights of the local community against intrusion from outside forces; that was why the Revolution was fought. Indeed, he does not hesitate to use words like "atavistic," "reactionary," and "totalitarian" to describe the sentiments and the ethos of colonial and Revolutionary Americans.

Americans lagged far behind their European contemporaries in developing centralized governments; authority lay in the towns and villages where by far the majority of Americans lived. The English tradition of local government

defined many of the freedoms that Americans sought for themselves: especially freedom from outside influence and intrusion.

Within these communities, however, individuals enjoyed very little freedom indeed. Pressures for conformity were intense; punishments for deviance were cruel. Drawing on sermons, particularly those given before various legislatures, Shain argues that freedom simply meant the opportunity to conform to prescribed standards and values. Divine service meant perfect freedom, and in a somewhat secular form, therefore, conformity to local values circumscribed the freedom of the individual. Even white males only enjoyed their freedoms as property owners and householders, that is, as incumbents of a status that carried with it all the burdens of citizenship.

So much for American "individualism." Shain argues that even the American elite lagged behind its English equivalent in understanding and espousing the rights and freedoms of the individual. Thus, when Tocqueville warned of individualistic tendencies in American society, he was simply blinded by his own aristocratic predispositions, and his distortions have affected Americans' perceptions of themselves ever since.

Underlying this totalitarian tendency, Shain argues, were not only republicanism and even rationalism but also the teachings of the Reformed Protestant churches in America. Calvinism in America was reactionary and authoritarian; it reinforced demands for local control, the exclusion of deviants, and the sacrifice of individual autonomy. The one exception to this bleak picture, Shain argues, is a notion of religious freedom, but even the demand for such freedom reinforced the rights of local congregations and communities far more than the rights of the individual.

Communitarians take note. This book finds totalitarian tendencies far more deeply rooted in American history than the vaunted individualism, which had elite origins and began to become widespread only in the nineteenth century. The so-called rights of the individual are a relatively recent political and legal fiction, and they coexist uneasily with the persistent tendency of local communities to intrude vigorously into the lives and privacy of the individual. "By the end of the Revolutionary period, even for the most progressive Americans . . . the modern free individual was at best tolerated, rather than encouraged and celebrated. The individualistic and Romantic encouragement of the autonomous self would have to wait for another day and a less somber and catechized leadership" (p. 233).

In the end, Shain notes, there were really only two inalienable rights after the Revolution. One was the right of a majority to impose its will. The other was the right of the religious conscience to be free from coercion. There were

in fact few impediments to the dictatorship of the religious majority. These two inalienable rights coexisted in tension with each other. The purpose of freedom of conscience was to allow the individual to follow the leadings of a God who called the individual to obedience and self-sacrifice. Political liberty was still largely corporate and communal, and without it there could be no development of the individual citizen, whose nature would always and everywhere be contaminated by original sin.

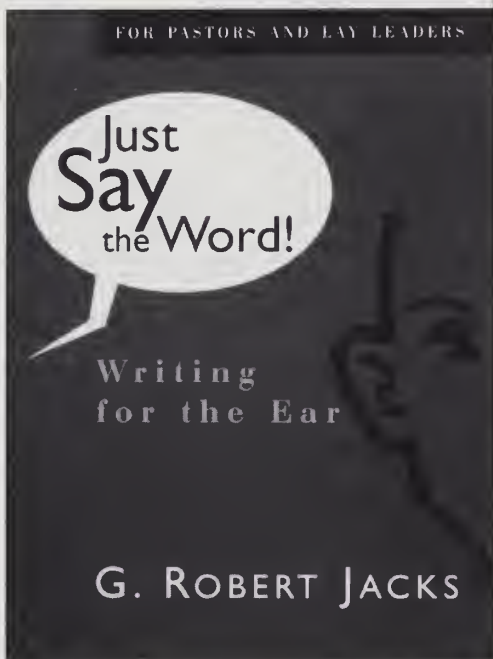
Shain's book is a timely and essential warning of the dangers to freedom that develop when the repressive tendencies of reform Christianity are linked with the authority of local communities and of the state. Reactionary and totalitarian tendencies are as American as apple pie.

Richard K. Fenn
Princeton Theological Seminary

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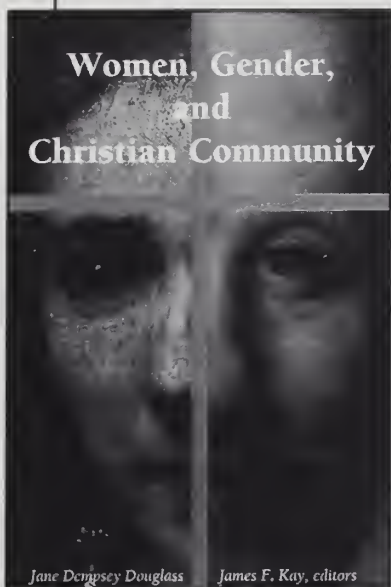
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